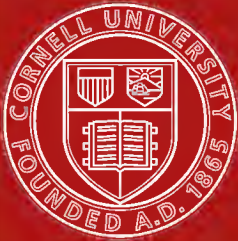


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THE  
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.—RIGHT REV. H. COTTERILL, D.D.,

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RAWLINSON, M.A.—REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY  
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PSALMS.

Exposition :  
BY REV. G. RAWLINSON, M.A.,  
CANON OF CANTERBURY.

Homiletics :  
BY REV. E. R. CONDER, D.D.

Homilies by Various Authors :  
REV. C. CLEMANCE, D.D.      REV. W. FORSYTH, M.A.  
REV. C. SHORT, M.A.

*VOL. I.*

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LVS



# THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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### § 1. TITLES OF THE WORK, AND GENERAL CHARACTER.

THE usual Hebrew title of the work is Tehillim (תהלים), or Sepher Tehillim (ספר תהלים); literally, "Praises," or "Book of Praises"—a title which expresses well the general character of the pieces whereof the book is composed, but which cannot be said to be universally applicable to them. Another Hebrew title, and one which has crept into the text itself, is Tephilloth (תפילות), "Prayers," which is given at the close of the second section of the work (Ps. lxxii. 20), as a general designation of the pieces contained in the first and second sections. The same word appears, in the singular, as the special heading of the seventeenth, eighty-sixth, ninetyeth, hundred and second, and hundred and forty-second psalms. But, like Tehillim, this term is only applicable, in strictness, to a certain number of the compositions which the work contains. Conjointly, however, the two terms, which come to us with the greatest amount of authority, are fairly descriptive of the general character of the work, which is at once highly devotional and specially intended to set forth the praises of God.

It is manifest, on the face of it, that the work is a *collection*. A number of separate poems, the production of different persons,<sup>1</sup> and belonging to different periods, have been brought together, either by a single editor, or perhaps by several distinct editors, and have been united into a volume, which has been accepted by the Jewish, and, later on, by the Christian, Church, as one of the "books" of Holy Scripture. The poems seem originally to have been, for the most part, quite separate and distinct; each is a whole in itself; and most of them appear to have been composed for a special object, and on a special occasion. Occasionally, but very seldom, one psalm seems linked on to another; and in a few instances

<sup>1</sup> See the titles of Ps. iii., xlii., lxxii., lxxiii., lxxxviii., lxxxix., xc., in the Hebrew, and of Ps. cxxxvi., cxxxvii., cxlv.—cxlviii., in the Septuagint.

there are groups of psalms intentionally attached together, as the group from Ps. lxxiii. to lxxxiii., ascribed to Asaph, and, again, the "Hallelujah" group—from Ps. cxlvi. to cl. But generally no connection is apparent, and the sequence seems, so to speak, accidental.

Our own title of the work—"Psalms," "The Psalms," "The Book of Psalms"<sup>1</sup>—has come to us, through the Vulgate, from the Septuagint. *Ψαλμὸς* meant, in the Alexandrian Greek, "a poem to be sung to a stringed instrument;"<sup>2</sup> and as the poems of the Psalter were thus sung in the Jewish worship, the name *Ψαλμοί* appeared appropriate. It is not, however, a translation of either *Tehillim* or *Tephilloth*, and it has the disadvantage of dropping altogether the spiritual character of the compositions. As, however, it was applied to them, certainly by St. Luke (xx. 42; Acts i. 20) and St. Paul (Acts xiii. 33), and possibly by our Lord<sup>3</sup> (Luke xxiv. 44), we may rest content with the appellation. It is, at any rate, one which is equally applicable to all the pieces whereof the "book" is composed.

## § 2. DIVISIONS OF THE WORK, AND PROBABLE GRADUAL FORMATION OF THE COLLECTION.

A Hebrew tradition divided the Psalter into five books. The Midrash or comment on the first verse of Ps. i. says, "Moses gave to the Israelites the five books of the Law, and as a counterpart to these, David gave them the Psalms, which consist of five books." Hippolytus, a Christian Father of the third century, confirms the statement in these words, which are quoted and accepted by Epiphanius,<sup>4</sup> *Τοῦτό σε μὴ παρέλθοι, ὦ Φιλόλογε, ὅτι καὶ τὸ Ψαλτήριον εἰς πέντε διέειλον βιβλία οἱ Ἑβραῖοι, ὥστε εἶναι καὶ αὐτὸ ἄλλον πεντάτευχον*: i.e. "Be sure, too, that this does not escape you, O studious one, that the Hebrews divided the Psalter also into five books, so that *that* likewise was another Pentateuch." A modern writer, accepting this view, observes, "The Psalter is also a Pentateuch, the echo of the Mosaic Pentateuch from the heart of Israel; it is the fivefold book of the congregation to Jehovah, as the Law is the fivefold book of Jehovah to the congregation."<sup>5</sup>

The "books" are severally terminated by a doxology, not exactly the same in every instance, but of a similar character, which in no case forms any part of the psalm whereto it is attached, but is simply a mark of division (see Pss. xli. 13; lxxii. 18, 19; lxxxix. 52; cvi. 48). The books are of irregular length. The first book contains forty-one psalms; the

<sup>1</sup> "Psalms" is the title in the list prefixed to the Authorized Version of the Old Testament; "The Psalms" is the title given in the Sixth Article; "The Book of Psalms" appears as the heading to the collection itself in the Authorized Version. In the Prayer-book collection, on the other hand, the title given is "The Psalms of David," which is misleading.

<sup>2</sup> See Liddell and Scott's 'Lexicon,' *sub voce*.

<sup>3</sup> It is still disputed whether the language used by our Lord ordinarily was Aramaic or Greek.

<sup>4</sup> 'De Mens. et Pond.,' c. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Delitzsch.



second, thirty-one; the third and fourth, seventeen respectively; and the fifth, forty-four. The first and second books are mainly Davidical; the third is Asaphian; the fourth, chiefly anonymous; the fifth, about three-fifths anonymous and two-fifths Davidical. It is difficult to assign to the several books any special characteristics. The psalms of the first and second books are on the whole more mournful, and those of the fifth more jubilant, than the remainder. The historical element is especially pronounced in the third and fourth books. Books I., IV., and V. are strongly Jehovistic; Books II. and III. are, on the contrary, predominantly Elohistie.<sup>1</sup>

It is generally allowed that the collection was formed gradually. A strong note of division—"The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended"—separates the first two books from the others, and seems to have been intended to mark the completion either of the original edition or of a recension. A recension is perhaps the more probable, since the note of division at the close of Ps. xli., and the sudden transition from Davidical to Korahite psalms, raises the suspicion that at this point a new hand has intervened. Probably the "first book" was, speaking generally, collected together soon after the death of David, perhaps (as Bishop Perowne thinks<sup>2</sup>) by Solomon, his son. Then, not very long afterwards, the Korahite Levites attached Book II., consisting of a collection of their own (Pss. xlii.—xlix.), a single psalm of Asaph (Ps. l.), and a group of psalms (Pss. li.—lxxii.) which they believed to have been composed by David, though omitted from Book I. At the same time, they may have prefixed Pss. i. and ii. to Book I. as an introduction, and appended the last verse of Ps. lxxii. to Book II. as an epilogue. The third book—the Asaphian collection—is thought, with some reason, to have been added in a recension made by the order of Hezekiah,<sup>3</sup> to which there is an allusion in 2 Chron. xxix. 30. It is a reasonable conjecture that the last two books were collected and added to the previously existing Psalter by Ezra and Nehemiah,<sup>4</sup> who made the division at the close of Ps. cvi. on grounds of convenience and harmony.

### § 3. AUTHORS.

That the principal contributor to the collection, the main author of the Book of Psalms, is David, though denied by some moderns,<sup>5</sup> is the general conclusion in which criticism has rested, and is likely to rest. The historical books of the Old Testament assign to David more than one of the psalms contained in the collection (2 Sam. xxii. 2—51; 1 Chron. xvi. 8—36). Seventy-three of them are assigned to him by their titles. The psalmody of the temple generally is said to be his (1 Chron. xxv. 1—6; 2 Chron. xxiii. 18). The Book of Psalms was known in Maccabean times as "the

<sup>1</sup> In the First Book (Pss. i.—xli.) *Jehovah* occurs 272 times, *Elohim* only 15. In the second, *Elohim* greatly preponderates. In the fourth and fifth *Jehovah* occurs 339 times, *Elohim* (of the true God) once only.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Book of Psalms,' vol. i. p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> As Olshausen, Kuenen, Von Lengerke, and Hitzig.

Book of David (τὰ τοῦ Δαβὶδ)" (2 Macc. ii. 13). David is cited as the author of the sixteenth and the hundred and tenth psalms by the writer of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts ii. 25, 34). Internal evidence points to him strongly as the writer of several others. The extravagant opinion that he wrote the whole book<sup>1</sup> could never have been broached if he had not written a considerable portion of it. With respect to what psalms are to be regarded as his, there is naturally considerable doubt. Whatever value may be assigned to the "titles," they cannot be regarded as absolutely settling the question.<sup>2</sup> Still, where their authority is backed up by internal evidence, it seems well worthy of acceptance. On this ground, the sober and moderate school of critics, including such writers as Ewald, Delitzsch, Perowne, and even Cheyne, agree in admitting a considerable portion of the Psalter to be Davidic. The psalms claiming to be Davidical are found chiefly in the first, second, and fifth books—thirty-seven in the first, eighteen in the second, and fifteen in the fifth. In the third and fourth books there are only three psalms (Pss. lxxxviii., ci., and ciii.) which claim to be his.

The next most important contributor would seem to be Asaph. Asaph was one of the heads of David's choir at Jerusalem (1 Chron. vi. 39; xv. 17, 19; xvi. 5), and is coupled in one place with David (2 Chron. xxix. 30) as having furnished the words which were sung in the temple service in Hezekiah's time. Twelve psalms are assigned to him by their titles—one in Book II. (Ps. l.), and eleven in Book III. (Pss. lxxiii.—lxxxiii.). It is doubted, however, whether the real personal Asaph can have been the author of all these, and suggested that in some instances the sept or family of Asaph is intended.

A considerable number of psalms—no fewer than eleven—are distinctly ascribed to the sept or family of Korahite Levites (Pss. xlii., xlv.—xlix., lxxxiv., lxxxv., lxxxvii., and lxxxviii.); and one other (Ps. xliii.) may be probably assigned to them. These psalms vary in character, and manifestly belong to different dates; but all seem to have been written in the times preceding the Captivity. Some are of great beauty, especially Pss. xlii., xliii., and lxxxvii. The Korahite Levites held a position of high honour under David (1 Chron. ix. 19; xii. 6), and continued among the chief of the temple servants, at any rate to the time of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xx. 19; xxxi. 14). Heman, the son of Joel, one of David's principal singers, was a Korahite (1 Chron. vi. 33, 37), and the probable author of Ps. lxxxviii.

In the Septuagint Version, Pss. cxxxviii., cxlvi., cxlvii., and cxlviii. are ascribed to Haggai and Zechariah. In the Hebrew, Ps. cxxxviii. is entitled "a Psalm of David," while the remaining three are anonymous. It would appear, from internal evidence, that the tradition respecting these three, embodied in the Septuagint, deserves acceptance.

Two psalms (Pss. lxxii. and cxxvii.) are in the Hebrew assigned to

<sup>1</sup> 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> See below, § 4.

**Solomon.** A large number of critics accept the Solomonio authorship of the former; but by most that of the latter is rejected. Solomon, however, is regarded by some as the author of the first psalm.

A single psalm (Ps. xc.) is ascribed to Moses; another single psalm (Ps. lxxxix.) to Ethan; and another (Ps. lxxxviii.), as already mentioned, to Heman. Some manuscripts of the Septuagint attribute Ps. cxxxvii. to Jeremiah.

Fifty psalms—one-third of the number—remain, in the Hebrew original, anonymous; or forty-eight, if we regard Ps. x. as the second part of Ps. ix., and Ps. xliii. as an extension of Ps. xlii. In the Septuagint, however, a considerable number of these have authors assigned to them. Pss. cxxxviii., cxlvi., cxlvii., and cxlviii. (as already observed) are attributed to Zechariah, or to Zechariah conjointly with Haggai. So is Ps. cxlix. in some manuscripts. David is made the author of Pss. xlv., xlv., xlvii., xlviii., xlix., lxvii., lxxi., xci., xciii., xciv., xcv., xevi., xcvii., xcvi., xcix., civ., and cxxxvii. in several copies; and in a few David is made joint author of two psalms (Pss. xlii. and xliii.) with the sons of Korah. On the whole, the collection may be said to have proceeded from at least six individuals—David, Asaph, Solomon, Moses, Heman, and Ethan—while three others—Jeremiah, Haggai, and Zechariah—may not improbably have had a hand in it. How many Korahite Levites are included under the title, “sons of Korah,” it is impossible to say; and the number of the anonymous authors is also uncertain.

#### § 4. DATE AND VALUE OF THE “TITLES,” OR SUPERSCRPTIONS TO PARTICULAR PSALMS.

On a comparison of the “titles” in the Hebrew with those in the Septuagint, it is at once apparent (1) that those in the Hebrew are the originals; and (2) that those in the Septuagint were taken from them. The antiquity of the titles is thus thrown back to at least as early as the second century B.C. Nor is this the whole. The Septuagint translator or translators clearly write *considerably* later than the original authors of the titles, since a largish portion of their contents is left untranslated, being unintelligible to them. This fact is reasonably regarded as throwing back their antiquity still further—say, to the fourth, or perhaps to the fifth century B.C.—the time of Ezra.

Ezra, it is generally allowed, made a recension of the Scriptures of the Old Testament as existing in his day. It is a tenable theory that he affixed the titles. But, on the other hand, it is a theory quite as tenable that he found the titles, or at any rate a large number of them, already affixed. Lyrical compositions among the Hebrews from the earliest times had superscriptions attached to them, generally indicating the name of the writer (see Gen. iv. 23; xlix. 1, 2; Exod. xv. 1; Deut. xxxi. 30; xxxiii. 1; Judg. v. 1; 1 Sam. ii. 1; 2 Sam. i. 17; xxii. 1; xxiii. 1; Isa. ii. 1; xiii. 1;

xxxviii. 9; Jonah ii. 1; Hab. iii. 1). If the collection of the psalms was made gradually,<sup>1</sup> it is perhaps most probable that each collector gave titles where he could, to the psalms which he collected. In that case the titles of Book I. would probably date from early in the reign of Solomon;<sup>2</sup> those of Book II. from late in that reign; those of Book III. from the time of Hezekiah; and those of Books IV. and V. from the age of Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>3</sup>

The earlier titles would, of course, be the more valuable, and the more to be depended on; the later ones, especially those in Books IV. and V., could claim but little confidence.<sup>4</sup> They would embody merely the traditions of the Captivity period, or might be mere guesses of Ezra. Still, in every case, the "title" deserves consideration. It is *primâ facie* evidence, and, though it may be very weak evidence, is worth something. It is not to be set aside as wholly worthless, unless the contents of the psalm, or its linguistic characteristics, are distinctly opposed to the titular statement.

The contents of the titles are of five kinds: 1. Ascriptions to an author. 2. Musical directions.<sup>5</sup> 3. Historical statements as to the circumstances under which the psalm was composed. 4. Notices indicative of the character of the psalm or its object. 5. Liturgical notices.

Of the original (Hebrew) titles, one hundred contain ascriptions to an author, while fifty psalms are left anonymous. Fifty-five contain musical directions, or what appear to be such. Fourteen have notices, generally of great interest, as to the historical circumstances under which they were composed.<sup>6</sup> Above a hundred contain some indication of the character of the psalm or of its subject. The indication is generally given by a single word. The composition is called *mizmôr* (מִזְמוֹר), "a psalm to be sung with musical accompaniment;" or *shîr* (שִׁיר), "a song;" or *maskil* (מִשְׁכִּיל), "an instruction;" or *miktam* (מִקְתָּם), "a poem of gold;" or *tephillah* (תְּפִלָּה), "a prayer;" or *tehillah* (תְּהִלָּה), "a praise;" or *shiggaion* (שִׁגְיוֹן), "an irregular ode"—a dithyramb.<sup>7</sup> Or its object is declared to be either "teaching" (לְלִמָּד),<sup>8</sup> or "thanksgiving" (לְתוֹדָה),<sup>9</sup> or "to call to remembrance" (לְהִנָּקֵר).<sup>10</sup> Liturgical notices are such as *שִׁיר לַיהוָה הַשַּׁבָּת*, "a song for the sabbath day" (Ps. xcii.), *שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת*, "a song of the goings up" (Pss. cxx.—cxxxiv.), and the like.

<sup>1</sup> Compare above, § 2, p. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., note 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., note 4.

<sup>4</sup> It seems, certainly, highly improbable that Ezra and Nehemiah could have collected seventeen genuine psalms of David which had escaped the notice of all previous collectors.

<sup>5</sup> These are very obscure. The probable meaning of each such direction is considered in the comment on the psalm where it first occurs (see the introductions to Pss. iv., v., vi., viii., ix., xxii., xlv., xvi., liii., lvii., lxxx., etc.).

<sup>6</sup> See the titles to Pss. iii., vii., xviii., xxx., xxxiv., li., lii., liv., lvi., lvii., lix., lx., lxiii., and cxlii.

<sup>7</sup> *Mizmôr* occurs by itself 44 times, with *shîr* 13 times; *shîr* by itself 17 times; *maskil* 13 times; *miktam* six times; *tephillah* five times; *tehillah* and *shiggaion* each once only (Pss. vii. and cxlv.).

<sup>8</sup> Ps. lx.

<sup>9</sup> Ps. c.

<sup>10</sup> Pss. xxviii. and lxx.



## § 5. CHIEF GROUPS OF PSALMS.

The chief groups of psalms are, first and foremost, the Davidical; secondly, the Asaphian; thirdly, that of "the sons of Korah;" fourthly, the Solomonio; and fifthly, the anonymous.

The Davidical group is at once the most numerous and the most important. It consists of seventy-three psalms or hymns, which are thus distributed among the "books;" viz.: thirty-seven in the first, eighteen in the second, one in the third, two in the fourth, and fifteen in the fifth. The compositions appear to cover the greater portion of David's life. Fourteen are assigned with much reason to the years before his accession to the throne; nineteen to the earlier part of his reign, before the commission of his great sin; ten to the time between that fall and his flight from Jerusalem; ten to the period of his exile; and three or four to the time after his return, the closing period of his long reign. The remainder contain no indications of date. These results of a very careful analysis<sup>1</sup> may be thus tabulated—

Psalms of David's early life.	Psalms of the earlier part of his reign.	Psalms from the time of his great sin to his flight from Jerusalem.	Psalms of the exile.	Psalms of the last period of his reign.
vii. xi., xii., xiii. xvii. xxii., xxiii.  xxxiv., xxxv.	viii., ix., x. xv., xvi., xviii., xix., xx., xxi. xxiv., xxvi. xxix. xxxvi.	v., vi.    xxxii., xxxviii., xxxix., xl., xli. li., lv.  lxiv.	iii., iv.   xxvii., xxviii.  xxxi.  lxi., lxiii.  lxix., lxx. cxliii.	       xxxvii.      ciii., cxxxix.
lii., liv., lvi., lvii., lix.	lviii.  lx., lxviii. ol., cviii., cx.			

The Asaphian group is made up of a cluster of eleven psalms in Book III. (Pss. lxxiii.—lxxxiii.), and a single psalm (Ps. l.) in Book II. Pss. l., lxxiii., lxxv., lxxviii., lxxxi., lxxxii., lxxxiii., are not improbably the work of the specified author; but the remainder (Pss. lxxiv., lxxvi., lxxvii., lxxix., lxxx., lxxxii., and lxxxiii.) seem improperly assigned to him. They may, however, have been written by a member or members of the same sept, and so may have crept into a small collection to which the name of Asaph was attached. "The history of hymnology," as Bishop Perowne observes, "shows us how easily this may have happened."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the arrangement made by Canon Cook, in his "Introduction to the Book of Psalms" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. pp. 151—156), which is, in the main, here followed.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Book of Psalms,' vol. i. p. 99

The Korahite group of eleven or twelve<sup>1</sup> psalms belongs, in part to the second, and in part to the third book. It is best regarded as comprising the first eight psalms of Book II. (Pss. xlii.—xlix.) and four psalms (Pss. lxxxiv., lxxxv., lxxxvii., and lxxxviii.) in Book III. These psalms are predominantly Elohistie, though the name Jehovah occurs in them occasionally (Pss. xlii. 8; xliv. 23; xlv. 7, 11; xlvii. 2, 5, etc.). They set forth the Almighty especially as King (Pss. xlv. 4; xlv. 6; xlvii. 2, 7, 8; xlviii. 2; lxxxiv. 3). They speak of him by names not used elsewhere, *e.g.* “the living God” (חַי אֱלֹהִים),<sup>2</sup> and “Jehovah of hosts” (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת).<sup>3</sup> Their predominant ideas are, “delight in the worship and service of Jehovah, and the thankful acknowledgment of God’s protection vouchsafed to Jerusalem as the city of his choice.”<sup>4</sup> Three of them (Pss. xlii., xlv., and lxxxiv.) are psalms of special beauty.

The Solomonic psalms are two only, if we confine ourselves to the indications given by the titles, viz. Pss. lxxii. and cxvii.; but the first psalm is also thought by many to be Solomonic.<sup>5</sup> These psalms have not many marked characteristics; but we may, perhaps, note a sobriety of tone in them, and a sententiousness that recalls the author of Proverbs.

The anonymous psalms, forty-eight in number, are found chiefly in the last two books—thirteen of them in Book IV., and twenty-seven in Book V. They include several of the most important psalms: the first and second in Book I.; the sixty-seventh and seventy-first in Book II.; the ninety-first, hundred and fourth, hundred and fifth, and hundred and sixth in Book IV.; and in Book V. the hundred and seventh, hundred and eighteenth, hundred and nineteenth, and hundred and thirty-seventh. The Alexandrian school assigned several of them, as already mentioned, to authors,<sup>6</sup> as the sixty-seventh, the seventy-first, the ninety-first, the hundred and thirty-seventh, and the entire group from Ps. xciii. to Ps. xcix.; but their attributions are not often very happy ones. Still, the suggestion that Pss. cxlvi., cxlvii., cxlviii., and cxlix. were the work of Haggai and Zechariah is not altogether to be rejected. “Evidently they constitute a group of themselves;”<sup>7</sup> and, as Dean Stanley says, “sum up the joy of the return from Babylon.”<sup>8</sup>

A very marked group is formed by the “Songs of Degrees”—שִׁירֵי מַעֲלוֹת—which extend continuously from Ps. cxx. to Ps. cxxxiv. These are most probably hymns composed for the purpose of being sung by the

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xliii. can scarcely have proceeded from any other than the writer of Ps. xlii. It “has the same metre, the same refrain, and refers to the same circumstances” (‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ vol. iv. p. 270). With Ps. xliii. the Korahite psalms are twelve.

<sup>2</sup> See Ps. xlii. 2 and Ps. lxxxiv. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See Pss. xlv. 7, 11; xlviii. 8; lxxxiv. 1, 3, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Perowne, ‘The Book of Psalms,’ vol. i. p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108; ‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ vol. iv. p. 173.

<sup>6</sup> See above, § 3, p. v.

<sup>7</sup> Cheyne, ‘Book of Psalms,’ p. 361.

<sup>8</sup> Stanley, ‘Lectures on the Jewish Church,’ vol. iii. p. 98.

provincial or foreign Israelites on their yearly "ascents" to keep the great festivals of Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> (see especially Ps. cxxii. 1, 2). They comprise the *De Profundis* (Ps. cxxx.) and the blessing on unity (Ps. cxxxiii.).

Other "groups" are the Hallelujah Psalms, the Alphabetic Psalms, and the Penitential Psalms. The title "Hallelujah Psalms" has been given to those which commence with the two Hebrew words, הַלְלֵי יְיָ, "Praise ye the Lord." They comprise the following ten: Pss. cvi., cxi., cxii., cxiii., cxxxv., cxlvi., cxlvii., cxlviii., cxlix., and cl. Thus all but one (Ps. cvi.) belong to the last book. Seven of them—all but Ps. cvi., cxi., and cxii.—end with the same phrase. Some critics add Ps. cxvii. to the number of "Hallelujah Psalms," but this commences with the elongated form, הַלְלֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

The "Alphabetic Psalms" are either eight or nine in number, viz. Pss. ix., xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii., cxi., cxii., cxix., cxlv., and, to a small extent, Ps. x. The most elaborate is Ps. cxix., where the number of stanzas is determined by the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and each of the eight lines of every stanza begins with its own proper letter—all the lines of the first stanza with *aleph*, all those of the second with *beth*, and so on. Other psalms equally regular; but less elaborate, are Pss. cxi. and cxii., where the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet furnish, in regular sequence, the initial letters of the twenty-two lines. The other "Alphabetic Psalms" are all of them more or less irregular. Ps. cxlv. consists of twenty-one verses only, instead of twenty-two, omitting the verse which should have commenced with the letter *nun*. No reason can be assigned for this. Ps. xxxvii. contains two irregularities—one in ver. 28, where the stanza that should have begun with *ain* begins actually with *lamed*; and the other in ver. 39, where *vau* takes the place of *tau* as the initial letter. Ps. xxxiv. omits *vau* altogether, and adds *pe* as an initial letter at the end. Ps. xxv. omits *beth*, *vau*, and *kaph*, adding *pe* at the end, like Ps. xxxiv. Ps. ix. omits *daleth* and *yod*, and jumps from *kaph* to *koph*, and from *koph* to *shin*, also omitting *tau*. Ps. x., sometimes called alphabetic, is so only in its latter portion, where stanzas of four lines each commence respectively with *koph*, *resh*, *shin*, and *tau*. The object of the alphabetic arrangement was, no doubt, in every case, to assist the memory; but only Pss. cxi., cxii., and cxix. can have been of very much service in this respect.

The "Penitential Psalms" are generally said to be seven; but a far larger number of the Psalms have a predominantly penitential character.<sup>2</sup> There is no authoritative limitation of the number to seven; but Origen first, and after him other Fathers, have given a certain sanction to the view, which has on the whole prevailed in the Church. The psalms especially singled out are the following: Pss. vi., xxxii., xxxviii., li., cii.,

<sup>1</sup> Several other explanations have been given; but this, which is preferred by Bishop Porwone, appears to be the best (see Ezra vii. 9; Isa. xxx. 29).

<sup>2</sup> As Pss. xxv., xxxi., lxx., lxix., etc.

cxxx., and cxliii. It will be observed that five out of the seven are, by their titles, assigned to David.

One other group of psalms seems to require special notice, viz. "the Imprecatory or Comminatory Psalms." These psalms have been called "vindictive," and said to breathe a most unchristian spirit of revenge and hatred. To some truly pious persons they seem shocking; and to a much larger number they are more or less a matter of difficulty. Pss. xxxv., lxix., and cix. are especially objected to; but the spirit which animates these compositions is one which constantly recurs; e.g. in Pss. v. 10; xxviii. 4; xl. 14, 15; lv. 16; lviii. 6, 9; lxxix. 6—12; lxxxiii. 9—18, etc. Now, it is not, perhaps, a sufficient answer, but it is some answer, to note that these imprecatory psalms are, for the most part, *national* songs; and that the utterers of them are calling for vengeance, not so much on their own personal enemies, as on the enemies of their nation, whom they look upon also as God's enemies, since Israel is his people. The expressions objected to are thus in some sort parallel to those which find a place in our National Anthem—

"O Lord our God, arise,  
Scatter her enemies . . .  
Confound their politics;  
Frustrate their knavish tricks."

Further, the "imprecations," if we must so term them, are evidently "the outpourings of hearts animated by the highest love of truth and righteousness and goodness,"<sup>1</sup> jealous of God's honour, and haters of iniquity. They are the outcome of a righteous indignation, provoked by the wickedness and cruelty of the oppressors, and by pity for the sufferings of their victims. Again, they spring, in part, out of the narrowness of view which characterized the time—a time when men's thoughts were almost wholly confined to this present life, and a future life was only dimly and darkly apprehended. We are content to see the ungodly man in prosperity, and "flourishing like a green bay tree," because we know that it is but for a while, and that retributive justice will in the end overtake him. But they had no such assured conviction. Finally, it is to be borne in mind that one of the objects of the psalmists, in praying for the punishment of the wicked, is the benefit of the wicked themselves. Bishop Alexander has noticed that "each of the psalms in which the strongest imprecatory passages are found contains also gentle undertones, breathings of beneficent love."<sup>2</sup> The writers' desire is that the wicked may be recovered, while their conviction is that God's chastisements alone can recover them. They would have the arm of the wicked and evil man broken, that when God makes search into his wickedness, he may "find none" (Ps. x. 15).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kay, 'The Psalms,' appendix iv. p. 468.

<sup>2</sup> 'Bampton Lectures' for 1876: 'The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity,' p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the commentary of Professor Cheyne on the passage ('Book of Psalms,' p. 27, note on ver. 15), "Punish it (his ungodliness) till thou find none, *i.e.* till the last atom of wickedness be removed."



## § 6. VALUE OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

The Psalms have always been regarded by the Church, Jewish as well as Christian, with a special affection. The "Psalms of Ascents" were probably used from the actual time of David by the worshippers who thronged to Jerusalem on the occasions of the three great festivals. Other psalms were either originally written for the service of the sanctuary, or were introduced into that service at an early date, and thus made their way into the heart of the nation. David early acquired the title of "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. xxiii. 1) from a grateful people who delighted in his utterances. It was probably a feeling of special affection for the Psalms that produced the division into five books, by which it was made into a second Pentateuch.

In the Christian Church the Psalms won for themselves a place even above that which for centuries they had held in the Jewish. Morning and Evening Service each commenced with a psalm. In Passion Week, Ps. xxii. was recited every day. Seven psalms, selected on account of their solemn and mournful character, were set apart for the special additional services appointed for the season of Lent, and became known as "the seven penitential psalms." Tertullian, in the second century, tells us that the Christians of his day were wont to sing many of the psalms in their agapæ.<sup>1</sup> St. Jerome says<sup>2</sup> that "the psalms were continually to be heard in the fields and vineyards of Palestine. The ploughman, as he held his plough, chanted the Hallelujah; and the reaper, the vine-dresser, and the shepherd sang something from the Songs of David. Where the meadows were coloured with flowers, and the singing birds made their complaints, the psalms sounded even more sweetly." Sidonius Apollinaris represents boatmen, while they worked their heavy barges up the waters, as singing psalms till the banks echoed with "Hallelujah," and applies the representation to the voyage of the Christian life—

"Here the choir of them that drag the boat,  
While the banks give back responsive note,  
'Alleluia!' full and calm,  
Lifts and lets the friendly bidding float—  
Lift the psalm.

Christian pilgrim! Christian boatman! each beside his rolling river,  
Sing, O pilgrim! sing, O boatman! lift the psalm in music ever."<sup>3</sup>

The primitive Church, according to Bishop Jeremy Taylor,<sup>4</sup> "would

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Bishop Peirone, in his comment on the Psalms (vol. i. p. 23).

<sup>2</sup> See Bishop Alexander's 'Bampton Lectures,' pp. 235, 236.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 236. Compare the original—

"Curvorum hinc chorus helciariorum  
Responsantibus Alleluia ripis  
Ad Christum levat amniom celeusma,  
Sic, sic psallite, nauta et viator!"

<sup>4</sup> See the 'Sermon on the Whole Duty of the Clergy,' in his 'Works,' edit. C. P. Eden (vol. viii. p. 507).

admit no man to the superior orders of the clergy unless, among other pre-required dispositions, he could say all David's Psalter by heart." The Fathers generally delighted in the Psalms. Almost all the more eminent of them—Origen, Eusebius, Hilary, Basil, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Ambrose, Theodoret, Augustine, Jerome—wrote commentaries on them, or expositions of them. "Although all Divine Scripture," said St. Ambrose, in the fourth century,<sup>1</sup> "breathes the grace of God, yet sweet beyond all others is the Book of Psalms. History instructs, the Law teaches, prophecy announces, rebuke chastens, morality persuades; in the Book of Psalms we have the fruit of all these, and a kind of medicine for the salvation of man." "To me it seems," says Athanasius,<sup>2</sup> "that the Psalms are to him who sings them as a mirror, wherein he may see himself and the motions of his soul, and with like feelings utter them. So also one who hears a psalm read, takes it as if it were spoken concerning himself, and either, convicted by his own conscience, will be pricked at heart and repent, or else, hearing of that hope which is to Godwards, and the succour which is vouchsafed to them that believe, leaps for joy, as though such grace were specially made over to him, and begins to utter his thanksgivings to God." And again, "In the other books of Scripture are discourses which dissuade us from those things which are evil, but in this has been sketched out for us how we should abstain from things evil. For instance, we are commanded to repent, and to repent is to cease from sin; but here has been sketched out for us how we are to repent, and what we must say when we repent. . . . Again there is a command in everything to give thanks; but the Psalms teach us also what to say when we give thanks. . . . We are enjoined to bless the Lord, and to confess to him. But in the Psalms we have a pattern given us, both as to how we should praise the Lord, and with what words we can suitably confess to him. And, in every instance, we shall find these Divine songs suited to us, to our feelings, and our circumstances." Abundant other testimonies might be added with respect to the value of the Book of Psalms; but perhaps it is more important to consider briefly in what its value consists.

In the first place, then, its great value seems to be that it furnishes for our feelings and emotions the same sort of guidance and regulation, which the rest of Scripture furnishes for our faith and our actions. "This book," says Calvin,<sup>3</sup> "I am wont to style an anatomy of all parts of the soul, for no one will discover in himself a single feeling whereof the image is not reflected in this mirror. Nay, all griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, anxieties—in short, all those tumultuous agitations wherewith the minds of men are wont to be tossed—the Holy Ghost hath here represented to the life. The rest of Scripture contains the commands which God gave to his servants to be delivered to us; but here the prophets themselves, holding

<sup>1</sup> 'Opera' (Venet., 1748), vol. ii., comment on Ps. i.

<sup>2</sup> 'Epist. ad Marcell.,' §§ 10—12.

<sup>3</sup> Preface to 'Commentary on the Psalms.'

converse with God, inasmuch as they lay bare all their inmost feelings, invite or impel every one of us to self-examination, that of all the infirmities to which we are liable, and all the sins of which we are so full, none may remain hidden." The portraiture of the emotions is accompanied by sufficient indications of which of them are pleasing and which displeasing to God, so that by the help of the Psalms we may not only express, but also regulate, our feelings as God would have us regulate them.

Further, the energy and warmth of devotion exhibited in the Psalms is suited to stir up and inflame our hearts to a greater affection and zeal than they could otherwise readily attain to, and thus to raise us to spiritual heights beyond those natural to us. As flame enkindles flame, so the fervour of the psalmists in their prayers and praises passes on from them to us, and warms us to a glow of love and thankfulness which is something more than a pale reflex of their own. Without the Psalms, without the constant use of them, Christian life tends to become dead and dull, like the ashes of an extinguished fire.

Other uses of the Psalms, which add to their value, are intellectual. The historical psalms help us to picture to ourselves vividly the life of the nation, and often add touches to the narrative of the historical books which are of the highest interest. Those rightly ascribed to David fill out the portrait faintly sketched in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, turning into a living and breathing figure what, apart from them, were little more than a skeleton. The Messianic psalms address themselves in great part to our reason, and furnish an argument, second to few others, for the truth of Christianity. The whole Psalter is instinct with those truths which are felt on all sides to be of the essence of the Christian religion—its "theistic ideas are those which we find in our Creeds;" its Christology "unlocks many [obscure] passages." its "view of the mystery of man's conception, birth, and destiny is precisely that which has commended itself to Christian thought"<sup>1</sup> as most reasonable. As St. Basil says, "The Psalms contain a perfect theology."<sup>2</sup> In reading them, studying them, saturating with them our hearts and minds, we indoctrinate ourselves with the purest religious ideas expressed in language of the most perfect beauty.

#### § 7. LITERATURE OF THE PSALMS.

"No book has been so fully commented on as the Psalms," says Canon Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary;' "the literature of the Psalms makes up a library."<sup>3</sup> Among the Fathers, as already observed,<sup>4</sup> commentaries on the Psalms, or expositions of them, or of some of them, were written by Origen, Eusebius, Basil, Chrysostom, Hilary, Ambrose, Athanasius, Theodoret, Augustine, and Jerome; that of Theodoret being, perhaps, the best,

<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Alexander's 'Bampton Lectures,' p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> *Ἐν Ψαλμοῖς ἐνι θεολογία τελεία.*

<sup>3</sup> 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> See above, § 6, pp. xi., xii.

but that of Jerome having also a high value. Among Jewish commentators of distinction may be mentioned Saadiah, who wrote in Arabic, Aben Ezra, Jarchi, Kimchi, and Rashi. At the era of the Reformation the Psalms attracted great attention, Luther, Mercer, Zwingli, and Calvin writing commentaries, while other expository works were contributed by Rudinger, Agellius, Genebrard, Bellarmine, Lorinus, Geier, and De Muis. During the last century or so, the modern German school of criticism has laboured with great diligence at the elucidation of the Psalter, and has done something for the historical exegesis, and still more for the grammatical and philological exposition of the Psalms. The example was set by Knapp, who in 1789 published at Halle his work entitled, 'Die Psalmen übersetzt'—a work of considerable merit. He was followed by Rosenmüller not long afterwards, whose 'Scholia in Psalmos,' which made its appearance in 1798, gave at once "a full and judicious presentation of the most important results of previous labours,"<sup>1</sup> including the Rabbinical, and also threw fresh light on several subjects of much interest. Ewald succeeded to Rosenmüller, and in the early portion of the present century, gave to the world, in his 'Dichter des alt. Bundes,' those clever, but somewhat overbold, speculations, which elevated him into the leader of German thought on these and kindred subjects for above fifty years. Maurer lent his support to the views of Ewald, and helped greatly to the advance of Hebrew scholarship by his grammatical and critical researches, while Hengstenberg<sup>2</sup> and Delitzsch,<sup>3</sup> in their able and judicious Comments, toned down the extravagances of the Berlin professor, and encouraged the formation of a more subdued and reverent school of criticism. More recently Köster and Grätz have written in a similar spirit, and have helped to vindicate German theology from the charge of rashness and recklessness.

In England, not much was done to elucidate the Psalms, or facilitate the study of them, till about eighty years ago, when Bishop Horsley's son published his father's work, entitled, 'The Book of Psalms, translated from the Hebrew, with Notes explanatory and critical' (2 vols. 8vo, London, 1815), with a dedication to the Archbishop of Canterbury. This publication gave a stimulus to Hebrew studies, and especially to that of the Psalter, which led in a short time to an issue from the press of several works possessing considerable value, and not even yet wholly superseded by the productions of later scholars. One of these was a 'Key to the Book of Psalms' (London, Seeley), published by a Rev. Mr. Boys, in 1825; and another, still more useful, was "ספר תהלים, The Book of Psalms

<sup>1</sup> See the "Introduction to the Book of Psalms," by Canon Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Hengstenberg's 'Comment,' in three volumes, published at Berlin in 1842, has been made accessible to English readers by Messrs. Clark of Edinburgh, who reproduced it in an English dress in 1846.

<sup>3</sup> Delitzsch's 'Commentar,' published in 1860, has been pronounced by a most competent critic to be "the diligent work of a sober-minded theologian" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 960).

in Hebrew, metrically arranged," by the Rev. Joan Rogers, Canon of Exeter Cathedral, published at Oxford by J. H. Parker, in 1833. This book contained a selection from the various readings of Kennicott and De Rossi, and from the ancient versions, and also an "Appendix of Critical Notes," which excited a good deal of interest. About the same time appeared the 'Translation of the Psalms' by Dr. French and Mr. Skinner, which was issued from the Clarendon Press in 1830. A metrical version of the Psalms, by Mr. Eden, of Bristol, was published in 1841; and "An Historical Outline of the Book of Psalms," by Dr. Mason Good, was edited and published by his grandson, the Rev. J. Mason Neale, in 1842. This was succeeded in a few years by 'A New Version of the Psalms, with Notes, Critical, Historical, and Explanatory,' from the pen of the same author. Of these last two works it has been said that they were "distinguished by taste and originality rather than by sound judgment and accurate scholarship;" nor can it be denied that they did but little to advance the critical study of Hebrew among us. Dr. Jebb's 'Literal Translation and Dissertations,' published in 1846, was more important; and Mr. Thrupp's 'Introduction to the Psalms,' given to the world in 1860, together with his article on the Psalms in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible'<sup>1</sup> (published in 1863), raised the character of our psalmodic literature to a higher level. In the year 1859, Professor Alexander, of Princeton University in America, furnished to English and Anglo-American students an even more valuable treatise.<sup>2</sup>

But a still more advanced period now set in. In the year 1864 Canon (now Bishop) Perowne published the first edition of his elaborate work in two volumes, entitled, 'The Book of Psalms, a New Translation, with Introductions and Notes Explanatory and Critical' (London: Bell and Sons). This excellent and standard production has gone on from edition to edition ever since that date, receiving improvements at every step, until it is now decidedly one of the best, if not absolutely the very best, comment upon the Psalter. It is the work of a first-rate Hebraist, of a man of superior judgment and discretion, and of one whose erudition has been surpassed by few. English scholarship may well be proud of it, and may challenge a comparison of it with any foreign exposition. It was not left long, however, to occupy the field without a rival. In the year 1871 appeared the smaller and less pretentious work of Dr. Kay, once Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta, entitled, 'The Psalms translated from the Hebrew, with Notes chiefly exegetical' (London: Rivingtons), a scholarly production, characterized by much vigour of thought, and an unusual acquaintance with Oriental manners and customs. Almost simultaneously, in 1872, a work in two volumes, by Dr. George Phillips, President of Queen's College, Cambridge, made its appearance under the title of 'A Commentary on the Psalms, designed chiefly for the use of Hebrew Students

<sup>1</sup> Thrupp, in Dr. Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. ii. p. 960.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Psalms translated and explained,' by Joseph Addison Alexander, D.D., Professor of Theology, Princeton.

and of Clergymen' (London: Williams and Norgate), which deserved more attention than was accorded to it, since it is a storehouse of Rabbinical and other learning. A year later, in 1873, a fresh step in advance was made by the publication of the very excellent 'Commentary and Critical Notes on the Psalms' (London: Murray), contributed to the 'Speaker's Commentary on the Old Testament,' by the Rev. F. C. Cook, Canon of Exeter, assisted by Dr. Johnson, Dean of Wells, and the Rev. C. J. Elliott. This work, though written above twenty years ago, maintains a high place among English critical efforts, and is worthy of being put upon a par with the comments of Hengstenberg and Delitzsch. Meanwhile, however, a demonstration had been made on the other side by the more advanced school of English critics, in the production of a work edited by "Four Friends," and entitled, 'The Psalms chronologically arranged, an Amended Version, with Historical Introductions and Explanatory Notes' (London: Macmillan, 1867), wherein Ewald was followed almost slavishly, and the genuine "Psalms of David" were limited to some fifteen or sixteen. Efforts on the opposite, or traditional, side, however, were not wanting; and the Bampton Lectures of Bishop Alexander,<sup>1</sup> and the sober and learned comments of Bishop Wordsworth and Canon Hawkins, may be especially noticed. The slighter work of the Rev. A. S. Aglen, contributed to Bishop Ellicott's 'Old Testament Commentary for English Readers' (London: Cassell, 1882), is of less value, and yields too much to the German sceptical writers. The same must be said of Professor Cheyne's more elaborate contribution to the literature of the Psalms, published in 1888, and entitled, 'The Book of Psalms, or the Praises of Israel, a new Translation, with Commentary,' which, however, no student of the Psalter can afford to neglect, since the acuteness and learning displayed in it are undeniable. Excellent service has also been rendered to English students, comparatively recently, by the publication of the 'Revised Version,' issued at the instance of the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury (Oxford and Cambridge, 1885), which has corrected many errors, and given, in the main, a most faithful representation of the Hebrew original.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity,' being the Bampton Lectures for 1876. London: Murray, 1877.

# THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

## BOOK I.

### EXPOSITION.

#### PSALM I.

It is remarkable that neither the first nor the second psalm has any title. Titles are so much the rule in the first and second books of the Psalter, that, when they are absent, their absence requires to be accounted for. As thirty-eight out of the forty-one psalms in this section are distinctly assigned to David, we must suppose that the compiler did not view this psalm as his. Perhaps he did not know the author. Perhaps, if he was himself the author, he shrank from giving himself the prominence which could not but have attached to him if his name had, in a certain sense, headed the collection. Reticence would have specially become Solomon, if he was the author.

Commentators have generally recognized that this psalm is introductory and prefatory. Jerome says that many called it "the Preface of the Holy Ghost." Some of the Fathers did not even regard it as a psalm at all, but as a mere preface, and so reckoned the second psalm as the first (in many manuscripts of the New Testament, the reading is "first psalm" instead of "second psalm" in Acts xiii. 33). The composition is, as Hengstenberg observes, "a short compendium of the main subject of the Psalms, viz. that God has appointed salvation to the righteous, perdition to the wicked; this is the great truth with which the sacred bards grapple amid all the pain-

ful experiences of life which apparently indicate the reverse."

The psalm divides naturally into two nearly equal portions. In vers. 1—3 the character and condition of the righteous are described, and their reward is promised them. In vers. 4—6 the condition of the wicked is considered, and their ultimate destruction predicted.

Ver. 1.—Blessed is the man; literally, *blessings are to the man*. But the Authorized Version exactly gives the sense (comp. Ps. ii. 12). That walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. The margin gives, "or *wicked*," and this is probably the best rendering of the word used (רשע). The righteous man is first described negatively, under three heads. (1) He "does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly;" i.e. he does not throw in his lot with the wicked, does not participate in their projects or designs; (2) he standeth not in the way of sinners; i.e. he does not take part in their actions, does not follow the same moral paths; and (3) he sitteth not in the seat of the scornful; i.e. has no fellowship with them in the "scorn" which they cast upon religion. The word used for scornful (רצ) is Solomonian (Prov. i. 22; iii. 34; xiii. 1), but in the Psalter occurs only in this place.

Ver. 2.—But his delight is in the Law of the Lord. The righteous man is now described positively, under two heads. (1) He *delights* in the Law (comp. Ps. cix. 16, 47, 77; Rom. vii. 22). (2) He constantly *meditates* in it. The "Law" intended—חוק, not דבריה—*is probably not the mere Law of Moses, but God's law, as made known to man in any way. Still, the resemblance*

of the passage to Josh. i. 8 shows the Law of Moses to have been very especially in the writer's thoughts. In his Law doth he meditate day and night; compare, besides Josh. i. 8, the following: Ps. lxxiii. 6; cxix. 15, 48, 78, 97. Constant meditation in God's Law has characterized all saints.

Ver. 3.—And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. The comparison of a man to a tree is frequent in the Book of Job (viii. 16, 17; xiv. 7—10; xv. 32, 33, etc.), and occurs once in the Pentateuch (Numb. xxiv. 6). We find it again in Ps. cxli. 12—14, and frequently in the prophets. The "rivers of water" spoken of (נָחַל־מַיִם) are undoubtedly the "streams" (Revised Version) or "canals of irrigation" so common both in Egypt and in Babylonia, by which fruit trees were planted, as especially date-palms, which need the vicinity of water. That such planting of trees by the waterside was known to the Israelites is evident, both from this passage and from several others, as Numb. xxiv. 6; Eccles. ii. 5; Jer. xvii. 8; Ezek. xvii. 5, 8, etc. It is misplaced ingenuity to attempt to decide what particular tree the writer had in his mind, whether the palm, or the oleander, or any other, since he may not have been thinking of any particular tree. That bringeth forth his fruit in his season. Therefore not the oleander, which has no fruit, and is never planted in the East, but grows naturally along the courses of streams. His leaf also shall not wither. Compare the contrary threat of Isaiah against the wicked of his time, "Ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water" (Isa. i. 30). And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper; rather, perhaps, *in whatsoever he doeth he shall prosper*.

Ver. 4.—The ungodly are not so; or, *the wicked* (see the comment on ver. 1). But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. "Chaff" is used throughout Scripture as an emblem of what is weak

and worthless (see Job xxi. 18; Ps. xxxv. 5; Isa. v. 24; xvii. 13; xxix. 5; xxxiii. 11; xli. 15; Jer. xxiii. 28; Dan. ii. 35; Hos. xiii. 3; Zeph. ii. 2; Matt. iii. 12; Luke iii. 17). In ancient times it was considered of no value at all, and when corn was winnowed, it was thrown up in the air until the wind had blown all the chaff away (see the representation in the author's 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 163).

Ver. 5.—Therefore the ungodly (or, *the wicked*) shall not stand in the judgment. "Therefore," as being chaff, *i.e.* "destitute of spiritual vitality" (Kay), "the wicked shall not stand," or shall not *rise up*, "in the judgment," *i.e.* in the judgment of the last day. So the Targum, Rashi, Dr. Kay, Canon Cook, and others. It is certainly not conceivable that any human judgment is intended by "the judgment" (דִּינָה), and though possibly "all manifestations of God's punitive righteousness are comprehended" (Hengstenberg), yet the *main* idea must be that the wicked shall not be able to "stand," or "rise up," *i.e.* "hold up their heads" (Aglen), in the last day. Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. Here the human judgment comes in. Sinners will be cast out, not only from heaven, but also from the Church, or "congregation of the righteous," if not before, at any rate when the "congregation" is finally made up.

Ver. 6.—For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous. God is said to "know" those of whom he approves, and on whom he "lifts up the light of his countenance." The wicked he does not "know;" he "casts them out of the sight of his eyes"—"casts them behind his back;" refuses to acknowledge them. God "knows the way of the righteous," and therefore they live and prosper; he does not know the way of the wicked, and therefore the way of the (wicked, or) ungodly shall perish (compare the beginning and end of Ps. cxii.).

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The godly man*. This psalm nobly fills the place of prologue to the whole Book of Psalms. It reminds us of our Saviour's words when Nathanael drew near: "Behold an Israelite indeed!" With that marvellous, condensed fulness and graphic force which peculiarly mark the Scriptures, it draws the portrait of the *godly man*. If we compare the Old Testament picture of "an Israelite indeed" with the New Testament picture of the true believer—"a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," we find no discord, only a fulness, richness, tenderness, power, in the latter, impossible before the Light of the world shone on human hearts and lives. The one is like a clear, perfect outline; the other, like the painting which adds to the outline colour, light, and shadow.



I. The godly man is described **NEGATIVELY**, in sharp contrast with the ungodly. They are as little to his mind as he to theirs. The Revised Version here gives a stricter rendering—"wicked." But our English word "ungodly" expresses the real essence of all wickedness, the secret spring of sin (comp. Ps. liv. 3; xxxvi. 1; Jer. ii. 13). 1. He is not guided by this world's *maxims*, walks not "in the counsel"—by the rule, of those who leave God out of their reckoning. N.B.—The chief thing in life is the *counsel*—plan, ruling principles, and *maxims*—by which it is guided. *E.g.* one man's aim in life is "to die rich;" another's motto, "Short life and merry;" another's, "To me to live is Christ." 2. His *conduct*, therefore, openly contrasts. "Nor standeth," etc. Closely associated, it may be, in business, society, public affairs; for else he "must needs go out of the world" (1 Cor. v. 10); yet, as his aim is not theirs, so their means are not his means, nor their path his path (Prov. iv. 14, 15). Business life has temptations from which recluse life is free, but also opportunities for witnessing for truth and Christ. 3. His *chosen company* corresponds with counsel and conduct. "Nor sitteth," etc. Not frequenting their haunts, sharing their revels, making them his bosom friends (Prov. i. 15; xiii. 20). N.B.—A steady progress in sin is indicated—*walking, standing, sitting*. First, stepping aside from the right path into crooked ways in compliance with evil counsel; secondly, continuing a line of conduct conscience condemns; at last, sitting down at the banquet of sinful pleasure, conscience drugged or seared, God openly despised. A picture of how many lives once bright with hope!

II. **POSITIVELY**, by one unmistakable, distinguishing mark: delight in God's Law. 1. The written Word is dear to him. The primary reference is, of course, to the Law of Moses, of which every letter was dear and sacred to the devout Israelite. How much dearer should the completed Scriptures be to the Christian (1 John i. 17)! 2. The deep spiritual truth of God's Word engages his profound study, is "the rejoicing of his heart" (Jer. xv. 16; Col. iii. 16). Take Ps. cxix. as the consummate expression of the value of God's Law to a mind taught by God's Spirit. Note the great principles embodied—that God rules by law; that each of us stands in direct relation to God, as subject to his Law; that this Law is plainly revealed. N.B.—No Israelite, however ungodly, could call in question the fact that God spake to and by Moses, without pouring contempt on the law and constitution of his country; this was the cornerstone. 3. He loves God's Law as the practical guide of his life (comp. John viii. 12, 31, 32).

**CONCLUSION.** This picture is realized in ideal perfection in our Lord Jesus. All the severity of vers. 4—6 is found in his denunciations of the impenitent cities, of guilty Jerusalem, of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, of wilful unbelievers (John xii. 48). But joined to this is the tender, sympathizing compassion, gracious humility, Divine love and forgiveness which made him "who knew no sin" the "Friend of sinners"—"able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," as well as "able to save to the uttermost" (Heb. vii. 25, 26; iv. 15; Matt. ix. 10—13).

Ver. 3.—"*He shall be like a tree,*" etc. Among the costly works in which King Solomon exercised his wisdom and displayed his magnificence were gardens rich in fruit trees and watered by channels and reservoirs (Eccles. i. 5, 6). Among these would be citrons and oranges, with their lustrous evergreen leaves and golden fruit; palms also, which love water and soil free from all foul decay and refuse. Some have fancied the similitude taken from the *oleanders* abounding by the streams of Canaan; but its fruit is poison; no one cares to *plant* it. An evergreen, fruit-bearing tree is here the bright image of the prosperous soul. (Solomon very possibly the author.)

I. **THE SECRET OF A GODLY LIFE.** Source and sustenance. "Planted," not self-sown, not dropped into its place by chance—planted by God's own hand (Jas. i. 18). "By the waters," drawing life and freshness from an unfailing source (Isa. iv. 14; vii. 37—39; xv. 4). Some lives that make a fair show are like trees whose roots run near the surface—the storm uproots them. The soul "rooted" in Christ (Col. ii. 7) is as the pine, sending down so strong a *tap-root* that the avalanche may break the trunk, but cannot uproot it.

II. **ITS FRUITFULNESS.** "Bringeth forth," etc. (comp. 2 Pet. i. 8; contrast Jude 12; see Gal. v. 22; Isa. xv. 6—8). Good deeds are fruitful deeds. "The seas n" may

tarry, but it will come (Jas. v. 7; Gal. vi. 9, 10). But if we "abide in Christ," our fruit will be always in season, like the orange, covered with fragrant flowers, green fruit and ripe fruit all at once—full of beauty and hope, as well as food.

III. ITS SECURITY AND VIGOUR. "Its leaf shall not wither." Evergreen. The primary reference may be to outward prosperity, like Joseph's (Gen. xxxix. 2—5, 23; see 1 Tim. iv. 8). Sickness, accident, hard times, losses through the failure or dishonesty of others, may befall the child of God as well as the child of the world; but the *natural tendency* of thorough integrity, of the diligence of one who does everything with his might as unto the Lord, and of the wisdom, courage, and good temper which are among the fruits of the Spirit, and the guidance of God's providence in answer to prayer, is to bring prosperity (Ps. xxxvii. 4—7; Phil. iv. 4—7). Yet observe, the Old Testament, as fully as the New, teaches the need and benefit of adversity (Prov. iii. 11, 12; Ps. xxxiv. 17—19). But there is prosperity that fears no change, glory that fades not, labour that cannot be lost (3 John 2; 1 Pet. i. 4; v. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 58).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The title: The Book of Psalms: the Psalms—their variety and value.* In the Book of Psalms, or, strictly speaking, in the five Books of Psalms, we have illustrations of most of the varied kinds of documents of which the entire Bible is made up. In their entirety the collection forms the Hebrews' 'Book of Praise,' or, as Professor Cheyne puts it, 'The Praises of Israel.'<sup>1</sup> It is probable, however, that very few, in their private devotions, read all the Psalms with equal frequency or delight. There are some "favourites," such as Pss. xxiii., xlv., cxlv., etc. The fact is that spiritual instincts are often far in advance of technical definitions, and the heart finds out that which is of permanent value over and above its historic interest, far more quickly than the intellect defines the reason thereof. Ere we pursue the study of the Psalms one by one, it may be helpful to note the main classes into which they may be grouped, as such classification will enable us the better to set in order the relation which each one bears to "the whole counsel of God." In the last of the Homiletics on Deuteronomy by the present writer, there is a threefold result indicated of communion between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man.<sup>2</sup> When such fellowship is in the devotional sphere, it subserves the life of *religion*; when the Spirit of God impels to the going forth on a mission or the writing of a record, that is *inspiration*; when the Spirit of God discloses new truth or forecasts the future, that is *revelation*. These three divisions indicate three main groups under which the Psalms may be classified. For the most part, each one speaks for itself, and with sufficient clearness indicates to which of the three groups it belongs; and *according to the group in which it is found will be the value and bearing of the psalm on the believer's experience, faith, and life.*

I. MANY OF THE PSALMS ARE THE OUTCOME OF PRIVATE OR PUBLIC DEVOTION. It is in these that we get a priceless glimpse into the heartwork of Old Testament saints, and see how constant was their habit of pouring out their souls to God. Pss. iii., iv., v., vii., viii., x., xiii., *et alii*, are illustrations of this. Whether the soul was elated by joy or oppressed with care, whether bowed down with fear or rejoicing over a great deliverance, whether the presence of God was enjoyed or whether his face was hidden, whether the spirit was soaring in rapture or sinking in dismay,—amid all changes, from the overhanging of the blackest thundercloud to the beaming of the brightest sunshine, all is told to God in song, or plea, or moan, or plaint, or wail, as if the ancient believers had such confidence in God that they *could tell him anything*!<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The new edition of Dr. Wm. Binnie's book, 'The Psalms, their History, Teachings, and Use' (1886), will amply repay perusal; Cheyne, 'The Book of Psalms,' Preface (1888); also his Bampton Lectures thereon (1889).

<sup>2</sup> 'Pulpit Commentary on Deuteronomy,' pp. 570, 571.

<sup>3</sup> "The multiplied experiences of the soul, the various states of mind through which the regenerate children of the second Adam pass, from their first entrance upon the life of faith to the period when that life is swallowed up in light, are all exemplified in the Book of Psalms" (Edward Irving's Introductory Essay to Horne's 'Commentary on the Psalms.' The whole essay is extremely eloquent and powerful.

Many of these private prayers bear marks of limited knowledge and imperfect conception, and are by no means to be taken as models for us. But no saint ever did or could in prayer rise above the level of his own knowledge. Still, they knew that God heard and answered, not according to their thoughts, but according to his loving-kindness; hence they poured out their whole souls to God, whether in gladness or sadness. And so may we; and God will do exceeding abundantly for us above all that we ask or think.

II. ANOTHER GROUP OF PSALMS CONSISTS OF THOSE WHICH ARE THE PRODUCTS OF ANOTHER FORM OF DIVINE INSPIRATION. These are not necessarily addresses to God; they are, for the most part, an inspired and inspiring rehearsal of the mighty acts of the Lord, and a call to the people of God to join in the song of praise. Pss. xxxiii., xlv., xlviii., lxxviii., lxxxi., lxxxix., and many others, are illustrations of this. At the back of them all there is a revelation of God known, accepted, and enjoyed. And according to this great and glorious redemption are the people exhorted to join in songs of praise. There is, moreover, this distinction, for the most part, between the first group and the second—the first group reflects the passing moods of man; the second reflects the revealed character and ways of God. The first group is mostly for private use, as the moods of the soul may respond thereto; the second group is also for sanctuary song, and indicates the permanent theme of the believer's faith and hope, even "the salvation of God." With regard to the first group we may say, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." As to the second, the motto might be, "The Lord hath made known his salvation: therefore with our songs we will praise him." Under this head may also be set those calmly and sweetly meditative psalms, such as Pss. xxiii., xxxii., in which God's revelation of his works and ways gives its own hue to the musings of the saint. These are now the delight of believers, in public and in private worship, as the expression of an experience which is renewed in regenerate hearts age after age. None of them could possibly be accounted for by the psychology of the natural man; they accord only with the pneumatology of the spiritual man.

III. THE THIRD GROUP OF PSALMS CONSISTS OF THOSE IN WHICH THERE IS A DIRECT OR INDIRECT MESSIANIC REFERENCE AND FORECAST. Of these there are three kinds. 1. *There are those directly and exclusively Messianic*, such as Pss. ii., xlv., xlvii., lxxii., cx. Of all these, the second psalm is, perhaps, throughout, as much as any of the psalms, clearly and distinctly applicable to the Coming One, and to him only. For the purpose of seeing and showing this, it may well be carefully studied. Every verse, every phrase, every word, tells; in fact, even the glorious fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is scarcely more clearly Messianic than the second psalm. Even Professor Cheyne is compelled to admit its Messianic reference, and he tells us that Ibn Ezra does so likewise.<sup>1</sup> And that some of the psalms apply to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord himself assures us (Luke xxiv. 44). And in an age like this, when destructive criticism is so popular, it is needful for the believing student to be the more accurate, clear, and firm. 2. *Some psalms point to the era rather than to the Person of the Messiah.* Such are the fiftieth and the eighty-seventh psalms. They are prophetic expositions of truths which pertain to the Messianic times, and receive their full elucidation from the developed expositions of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament; they cover the ground of the Messianic age. 3. *Other psalms refer immediately to the writer himself, and have come to be regarded as Messianic because some of the words therein were quoted by the Lord Jesus Christ and adopted as his own.* Such a one is the twenty-second psalm, in which the writer bemoans his own sufferings and (according to the LXX.) his own transgressions. But it is not possible to apply every verse of this psalm to the Lord Jesus.<sup>2</sup> He, however, being in all things made like unto his brethren, was "in all points tempted like as we are;" hence the very groans of his brethren fitted his own lips. He came to have fellowship with us in our sufferings that we might have fellowship with him in his! Thus there is established a marvellously close sympathy between Jesus and his saints, since his temptations, sorrows, and groans resembled

<sup>1</sup> Cheyne on the Psalms, p. 4 (1888). Much of his exegesis is, however, extremely unsatisfactory, being vitiated by a foregone psychological theory.

<sup>2</sup> See the exposition of Ps. xlii.

theirs.<sup>1</sup> To this discriminating and believing study of the first fifty psalms, the writer ventures to invite the Christian student and expositor. We must avoid the extreme of those who, with Horne, would regard most, if not all, the psalms as Messianic; and also the extreme of those who would regard none as such. Because our Lord said that all things must be fulfilled that were written in the Psalms concerning him, we may not infer that words which were written concerning him filled up all the Psalms; nor, with the unbeliever, may we regard the claim of prophecy as invalid through any repugnance to the supernatural. Intelligent discernment and loving faith are twin sisters; may they both be our attendants during our survey of these priceless productions of Hebrew pens! And may the Spirit of God be himself our Light and our Guide!—C.

Vers. 1—6.—*The happy man.* The word “blessed” means “happy.” The phrase used night, indeed, be rendered, “Hail to the man,” etc.! The psalm itself may be called “a psalm of congratulations,” for the psalmist regards the man whom he here describes as one who has great reason for gladness, and who therefore may be fittingly congratulated. Ages ago the heathen said, “Call no man happy till he is dead.” But we have before us the picture of one who is certainly happy even now; who has a joy, of which neither crosses nor losses can deprive him; who will be happy as long as he lives; and who has still more happiness in store for him when death is past. It may be asked whether it is the highest kind of virtue to aim at being happy, or whether it is the noblest inducement to it to assure us that to be virtuous is to be happy? Perhaps not. But such a question could scarcely be asked unless the point of the psalm is altogether missed; for the psalmist is not speaking of the good man as happy because he is aiming at happiness, but as being so because he follows the Law of God, and finds joy therein, without seeking for joy for its own sake. And, anyway, if it be so that God has annexed joy to a life of loyalty to him, *it cannot make such loyalty less desirable* if it is crowned with gladness of heart. But, as we hope to point out shortly, the personal happiness is but a very small part of the “blessedness” which the good man possesses. Let us consider—

I. THE LIFE HERE DESCRIBED. Several marks are furnished to us here of “the blessed man.” 1. *Negative.* He is wisely careful not to have evil companionship. He knows that “he that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” Hence he shuns (1) the ungodly—those who have no fear of God before their eyes, and are perpetually restless in their self-will; (2) the sinners—those who indulge in open sin; (3) the scornful—those who ridicule religion and laugh at such as fear the Lord. His separation from such is complete. He will neither (1) follow their counsel; nor (2) sit in their seat; nor even (3) stand in their way. Note: If ever a man is to become wise, he must not mix promiscuously with others. We know well, in penning these words, that we are liable to the remark from some readers, “How commonplace!” We admit it. But it is just by non-attention to commonplace truth that millions are undone. We cannot reiterate too frequently, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.” 2. *Positive.* In avoiding evil, he does not throw himself upon a blank. But it is remarkable that, as the antitheses of “ungodly,” “sinners,” “scornful,” we do not get “godly,” “pure,” “reverent.” The fact is, the man whom this psalm describes will not be supremely anxious to have any companions. If he cannot have the right ones, he will do without them. And yet he will not be lonely. For the Law of Jehovah, the revealed covenant of God, will be before his eyes and in his heart. And herein he will

<sup>1</sup> See Dean Perowne’s admirable chapter on “The Theology of the Psalms,” in his Introduction to his ‘Notes on the Psalms,’ pp. 41—69, 6th edit. The Bampton Lecture by Bishop Alexander, ‘The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity,’ a new edition of which is just published (1890), is worthy of careful perusal; and so is also the fourth chapter in Mr. Gladstone’s book, ‘The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture’ (Isbister, 1890). ‘The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges,’ ‘The Psalms. Book I,’ edited by Professor A. F. Kirkpatrick, B.D., has just come into our hands (1891). It contains more helpful material in small compass, for students, than any other volume on the Psalms that we have chanced to see. The Religious Tract Society has just issued (1891) a neat and carefully edited edition of the Book of Psalms, with explanatory notes.

have a safe guide for the pathway he should follow. In thus following God's Law he will have: (1) *Ample material for thought*. "In his Law doth he meditate day and night" (ver. 2). "The Hebrew word *tôrâh* has a much wider range of meaning than "law," by which it is always rendered in the Authorized Version. It denotes (a) *teaching, instruction*, whether human (Prov. i. 8) or Divine; (b) *a precept or law*; (c) *a body of laws*, and in particular *the Mosaic Law*, and so, finally, *the Pentateuch*. It should be taken to include all Divine revelation as the guide of life."<sup>1</sup> We do not understand the psalmist as meaning that such a man will always be thinking of one topic. But that (a) by day he will use the Law of God as a direction-post to point the way; (b) by night he will use it as a pillow on which to rest his head. For in the Law there are revealed to him mercy, forgiveness, sacrifice, intercession, grace, strength. He will enthroned the Word of God in the place of honour, above all other books in the world. Some may raise a difficulty here, saying, "Yes; in the psalmist's time that might have been so. Then the sacred books of the Hebrews comprised their national history and their religious literature. There was not so much to call off men's thoughts from the Bible as there is now." That is so. But, nevertheless, the following facts remain: That in the Bible is the *only* authoritative revelation of the mind and will of God; that our Scriptures are to us a far richer treasure than the Scriptures of the psalmist's time; that therein we have the *only* guide through life to immortality. Other books may inform the mind. The Bible still retains its supremacy as the book to regulate the life. Hence in the Bible the believer has: (2) *Rich nutriment for character*. Hence he is described as "a tree planted by the rivers of water" (see also Jer. xvii. 8). Psalmist and prophet agree. The Scriptures reveal God. In God the believer puts his trust. So that the study of the book makes him like a fruitful tree, because it leads up to God. Thus there will be (a) unfailing supplies; (b) fruit in season; (c) a fadeless leaf; (d) entire success. "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

II. SUCH A LIFE HAS ITS OWN OUTLOOK AND DESTINY. As the man is now, so is his uplook and outlook here and hereafter. 1. *There is now Divine approval*. "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." 2. *His work and way will be influential for good long after he has ceased to live below*. (Ver. 6.) 3. *He will be approved at the judgment-day*. (Ver. 5.) He will be found "in the congregation of the righteous." And all this is set forth even more strikingly by the hints here given of the destiny of those with whom he would not be associated. As the Vulgate most touchingly has it, "Non sic impii, non sic." As he would not mingle with them here, he shall not be thrown with them hereafter. They will be as "chaff which the wind driveth away." Their *quality*, as chaff. Their *destiny*, as chaff. Terrible! How blessed to have a different destiny separately assigned, as the result of a course separately chosen!

III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF SUCH A LIFE IS HERE DECLARED AND DEFINED. If we put the question, "By whom is this blessedness pronounced?" the answer is: 1. *They are intrinsically blessed, ipso facto*, in being what they are. They are right, good, glad, strong, full of living hope. 2. *In the judgment of all good men they are blessed*, and even men who are not godly know that a life spent in accordance with the will of God is the truly right one. 3. *The Lord Jesus Christ declares them to be so now*. (Matt. v. 1—11.) 4. *At the last judgment the King will confirm the blessing*. Note: The purposes to be served by such a psalm as this are manifold. They are independent of its author, age, or land. 1. *To parents* this psalm is a treasure of infinite value, as giving them in outline (1) what they may well desire their children to be; and (2) the place of honour the Bible should occupy in their children's hearts. 2. *To teachers*. It discloses to them the life to be urged on their scholars, and tells them whence alone the nutriment for such a life can be drawn. 3. *To children*. It shows them that true happiness, in the highest sense, is attained only through true goodness; that true goodness can only be attained by feeding on the truth of God; and that to such a God-like character there is ensured everlasting life, an ever-during home. "Light is sown for the righteous."—C.

Vers. 1—6.—*The blessedness of the true*. "God is Love." He must, therefore, seek the happiness of his creatures. Man is the highest of his earthly creatures, and his

<sup>1</sup> Kirkpatrick. See also Professor Forbes's 'Studies in the Book of Psalms,' pp. 192, 198

happiness must be of the highest kind, not only fit for him to receive, but worthy of God to bestow. Such is the happiness here depicted. It does not come anyhow, but in accordance with law. It does not depend upon what a man has, but upon what he is. It is inward, not outward. It is of the spirit, not of the flesh. Happiness is blessedness—the blessedness of the true in character.

I. Mark the FOUNDATION. Sin is self-will. This implies separation from God; and this separation must be final, unless God himself prevent. But the godly man has been brought back into a right relation to God. God's will is his will. To know and to love and to obey God is his delight. His life is centred in God. Thus he is able to receive the blessing in its fulness, which God is ready freely to bestow. His character is founded upon the rock of the eternal, and not upon the shifting sands of time.

II. Mark next THE HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT. This is shown under the figure of a tree, fair and flourishing. 1. *The situation is choice.* It stands, not in the desert, but in a fit place. "Planted." The hand of God is seen in the godly man's life. This is his security. Where God has put him, God can keep him. 2. *The environment is favourable.* From the heavens above and the earth beneath nourishment is provided. The supply is rich and sure. Though worldly supplies may cease, and the waters of earth fail (Isa. xix. 5), the river of God will still run free (1 Kings xviii. 5; Isa. lv. 1—3). 3. *The progress is appropriate.* There is the power of assimilating (Mark iv. 27, 28). Life develops according to its own order. What the plant does unconsciously, subject to the law of its being, the godly man does freely and consciously, under the benign rule of Christ.

III. Lastly, mark THE CONSUMMATION. God's work always tends to completeness. Every advance is an approach. Every fulfilment is a prophecy of the perfect end. In the life of the godly there is the truest pleasure, the noblest usefulness, the heavenliest beauty. And the charm of all is permanence. There is not only moral freshness, as where there is real soundness of health, but there is enduringness. This is brought out vividly by contrast. "The ungodly are *not so*." With them there is no reality. Separated from the true life, everything is unstable and uncertain. There may be a kind of prosperity, but it is false and delusive. The pleasures of sin are but for a season; but the love of God is for ever. In the day of trial the just shall stand, accepted and blessed; but the wicked shall be winnowed out of the society of the true Israel, and swept away, as the worthless chaff, by the swift and resistless judgment of God.—W. F.

Vers. 1—6.—*Character.* This psalm supplies us with—

I. TEST OF CHARACTER. A man is known by the company he keeps. What doest thou, O my soul? With whom dost thou "walk" and "sit" (Ps. cxix. 63)?

II. RULE OF LIFE. What should we do? Surely the right thing is to ask counsel of God, and to submit ourselves to his holy and blessed rule. Let us do this, and we shall not only have life (Ps. xl. 8), but food (John iv. 44); and not only food, but society (Matt. xii. 50); and not only society, but education (Ps. cxliii. 10); and not only education, but joy unspeakable and full of glory (Ps. cxix. 65; 1 Pet. i. 8). "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John ii. 16, 17).

III. FORESHADOWING OF DESTINY. Acts fix habits, habits settle character, and character determines destiny. "The wind" may represent the various trials which meet us, and which so far show what we are and whither we are going. By conscience, by public opinion, by experience of the results of conduct, we are premonished of the coming end and the perfect judgment of God. Thus, not in an arbitrary way, but by our own deeds and life, our destiny for weal or woe is being settled. Eternity is the harvest of time. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—W. F.

Vers. 1—6.—*Greatness, happiness, prosperity.* We learn here the true idea of—

I. GREATNESS. It is not mere intellectual power, but moral worth. Greatness is goodness—the being like God.

II. HAPPINESS. It is living together with God, doing his will, in the light and joy of his love.

III. PROSPERITY. It is of the soul—the true health of the soul (3 John 2). Its

measure is personal activity. Deeds carry social influence. The weak and the unfortunate are too often despised, but let a man be true, let him stand up for the right, let him honestly serve God in his day and generation, and he will not only have peace within, but he will be "blessed in his deed." His influence will work for good, and will live and move others to noble ends when he himself is gone.

"Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,  
Our happiness, and all that we have been;—  
Immortally must live, and burn, and move,  
When we shall be no more."

W. F.

**Vers. 1—6.—Blessedness.** The word "blessed" might be rendered "blessings." God's people are blessed (Numb. vi. 24; Matt. v. 1—10).

I. There is the blessing of **PEACE**. The fruit of righteousness is peace. The heart is right with God.

II. The blessing of a **TRUE PURPOSE**. Not gain, nor pleasure, nor merely to save the soul, but to do God's will. This is the supreme thing. This gives strength to the heart and unity to the life.

III. The blessing of the **NOBLEST SOCIETY**. Into what a goodly fellowship do we enter as we join the company of God's people! The saints are our brethren; holy angels are our ministers; Christ is our abiding Friend.

IV. The blessing of **MORAL ADVANCEMENT**. Our path is onward. The more good a man does the nobler he becomes. By every act of self-denial and virtue he rises in dignity and strength.

V. The blessing of **SPIRITUAL USEFULNESS**. Only the good can do good. To augment the happiness of others is the sweetest pleasure.

VI. The blessing of a **BRIGHT FUTURE**. Life's interests are secured. The outlook, though at times clouded, ends in light.

VII. The **BLESSING OF GOD'S ETERNAL LOVE**. (Ver. 6, "knoweth.") "There is nothing in the world worth living for, but doing good and finishing God's work—doing the work Christ did" (Brainerd).—W. F.

**Vers. 1—6.—A contrast.** This psalm is introductory to all the rest, perhaps written after the finding of the "book of the Law" in Josiah's time, in an age of revival, when men were roused to consider the conflict between good and evil, and who were the truly blessed, and on what their blessedness was grounded. There is a contrast drawn in it between the righteous and the wicked.

I. **THE CHARACTER AND PRIVILEGES OF THE RIGHTEOUS.** 1. *They have no sympathetic relations with the wicked.* (Ver. 1.) They cannot help having some associations with them; but they do not *walk* with them, nor *stand* with them, nor *sit* with them, as they do with congenial friends. This description suggests the progress of the wicked. Walking only with a man we may soon part from him; but if we stand with him we linger in his company, and at last come to sit with him, scorning all goodness. 2. *Irresistibly attracted to the Divine Law.* (Ver. 2.) He is "in" it with all his affection and with his unceasing thought, rather than the Law is "in" him. Though both are true, *i.e.*, it solicits, commands, and absorbs him, and rules the world of thought, affection, and imagination. 3. *They are fruitful according to the time and circumstances of their lives.* (Ver. 3.) In youth, mature manhood, and ripe age. Patient in affliction, constant in trial, grateful in prosperity, and zealous when opportunity of work offers itself. 4. *Unfading freshness of heart and experience.* (Ver. 3.) His life is progressive, his faith grows deeper, and his power of achievement increases, and his hope becomes brighter, and his affections purer, and he blossoms with a green freshness for ever. 5. *He prospers in his undertakings.* (Ver. 3.) As a general rule, because he deserves it; for he aims at only right and lawful things, and employs only right and lawful means.

II. **CHARACTER AND DESTINY OF THE WICKED.** 1. *Intrinsic worthlessness.* (Ver. 4.) "Dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away"—dispersed by the wind. This is only a negative description, as a contrast with the living tree and its fruit.

It says nothing of such a man's poisonous influence. 2. *Unable to endure the scrutiny of the great Lawgiver.* (Ver. 5.) One inquiring glance of God shatters the whole structure of his life. God does not "know" his way. "I never knew you." 3. *Their relation to the Church only an outward one.* (Ver. 5.) Though they mingle with the congregation, they do not really "stand with them." 4. *Their habits of life are destructive.* (Ver. 6.) Their "way" is not the way everlasting, but leads to perdition, if it be not forsaken.—S.

Vers. 1—3.—*True blessedness.* "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful," etc.

I. THE NATURE OF TRUE BLESSEDNESS. 1. *Vigorous life of the soul.* "Like a tree planted," etc. The blessedness of the body is vigorous health. 2. *Productiveness.* Bringeth forth his fruit in his season. It must grow before it becomes fruitful. 3. *Perpetuity of life.* "His leaf also shall not wither." 4. *Success in his undertakings.* "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Success in the greatest undertaking, the true blessedness.

II. THE MEANS OF BLESSEDNESS. 1. *To shun the company and the counsels of the ungodly.* Standing in their way, partaking in their designs. 2. *Delight in Divine truth.* 3. *Persevering study of it.* Converting it into juice and blood.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM II.

Hence we have again a psalm without a title, and, so far, we are left to conjecture its age and author. The Jews, however, have always regarded it as Davidical; and there is evidence in Scripture itself (Acts iv. 25) that the early Christians were of the same opinion. Modern critics, for the most part, agree, although there are some (Ewald, Paulus, Bleek) who ascribe it to Solomon, and others (Maurer, Delitzsch) who suppose it written by Hezekiah or Isaiah.

The psalm is certainly Messianic. It is assumed to be so in Acts iv. 25; xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5; v. 5. However it may, to a certain extent, apply to David, David cannot exhaust its allusions. Vers. 7, 8, and 12 are inapplicable to David, and must refer to the Messiah. The Jews admitted the Messianic character of the psalm, until driven into denial by the controversy with Christians. Most modern critics allow it.

There is a certain correspondency between Pss. i. and ii., which may account for their being placed together. In both the main idea is the antagonism between the righteous and the wicked. Ps. i. sets forth this antagonism by a contrast between two typical individuals. Ps. ii. shows the two king-

doms of light and darkness engaged in their internecine conflict.

Ver. 1.—Why do the heathen rage? The psalmist writes with a vision before his eyes. He "sees Jehovah upon his throne, and Messiah entering upon his universal dominion. The enemies of both on earth rise up against them with frantic tumult, and vainly strive to cast off the fetters of their rule." Hence his sudden outburst. "What ails the heathen (*goim*)," he says "that they rage?" or "make an uproar" (Kay), or "assemble tumultuously" (margin of Authorized Version and Revised Version)? What are they about? What do they design? And why do the people—rather, *the peoples*, or "the masses" (Kay)—*imagine* (or, *meditate*) a vain thing? It must be "a vain thing;" i.e. a purpose which will come to naught, if it is something opposed to the will of Jehovah and Messiah. The vision shows the psalmist Jew and Gentile banded together against the gospel of Christ. Its scope is not exhausted by the exposition of Acts iv. 26, but extends to the whole struggle between Christianity on the one hand, and Judaism and paganism on the other. "The peoples" still to this day "imagine a vain thing"—imagine that Christianity will succumb to the assaults made upon it—will fade, die away, and disappear.

Ver. 2.—The kings of the earth set themselves; or, *draw themselves up in array* (comp. Jer. xlv. 4). Such kings as Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa, Nero, Galerius,



Diocletian, Julian the Apostate, etc. There is always a warfare between the world and the Church, in which kings are apt to take a part, most often on the worldly side. And the rulers take counsel together. "Rulers" are persons having authority, but below the rank of kings. Such were the ethnarchs and tetrarchs of the first century, the governors of provinces under the Roman emperor, the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin, and the like. These last frequently "took counsel against the Lord" (see Matt. xxvi. 3—5; xxvii. 1; Acts iv. 5, 6; v. 21—41). Against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying. In David's time the recognized "anointed of the Lord" was the divinely appointed King of Israel (1 Sam. ii. 10; xii. 3, 5; xvi. 6; xxiv. 6, 10; xxvi. 7, 16; 2 Sam. i. 14, 16; xix. 21; xxii. 51; 1<sup>st</sup> ss. xviii. 50; xx. 6; xxviii. 8)—first Saul, and then David; but David here seems to designate by the term a Greater than himself—the true theocratic King, whom he typified.

Ver. 3.—Let us break their bands asunder. Wicked men always feel God's rule and his Law to be restraints. They chafe at them, fret against them, and, in the last resort—so far as their will goes—wholly throw them off. And cast away their cords from us. "Bands" and "cords" are the fetters that restrain prisoners. The rebels determine to burst them, and assert their absolute freedom.

Ver. 4.—He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. God "laughs" at the vain and futile efforts of man to escape from the control of his laws and throw off his dominion (comp. Ps. xxxvii. 13; lix. 8). It is impossible that these efforts should succeed. Men must obey God willingly, or else unwillingly. The Lord (*Adonay* in the ordinary Hebrew text, but a large number of manuscripts have *Jehovah*) shall have them in derision. "Laughter" and "derision" are, of course, anthropomorphisms. It is meant that God views with contempt and scorn man's weak attempts at rebellion.

Ver. 5.—Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath. "Then" (18) means "after a time"—"presently" ('Speaker's Commentary'), when the fitting period has arrived. "He shall speak"—not in articulate words, not by a voice from heaven, not even by a commissioned messenger, but by accomplished facts. Christ does rule; Christ does reign; he sits a King in heaven, and is acknowledged as a King upon earth. In vain was all the opposition of the Jews, in vain persecution after persecution by the Gentiles. God has established his Church, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And vex them. "Strike terror and dismay into them" (Kay). In his sore

displeasure; or, "in the heat of his anger" (Trench and Skinner).

Ver. 6.—Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion; literally, *and as for me, I have set my King upon Zion, the mount of my holiness*. The words are uttered by Jehovah, and must refer to the Anointed One of ver. 2. This Anointed One God has set up as King upon Zion, his holy mountain. Without denying some reference to David, the type, we must regard the Anti-type, Christ, as mainly pointed at. Christ is set up for ever as King in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 2—7; xxii. 1—5). There is no need to substitute "anointed" for "set" or "set up," as is done by Rosenmüller, Gesenius, Ewald, Zunz, Umbreit, and others, since *קָדַשׁ* has both meanings (comp. Prov. viii. 23).

Ver. 7.—I will declare the decree. It is best to suppose that Messiah here takes the word, and maintains it to the end of ver. 9, when the psalmist resumes in his own person. Messiah "declares," or publishes, a "decree," made by God the Father in the beginning of all things, and communicated by him to the Son, whereby he made known the relationship between them, and invested the Son with sovereign power over the universe. The Lord hath said unto me; rather, *said unto me* (see the Revised Version). It was said, once for all, at a distant date. Thou art my Son. Not "one of my sons," but "my Son;" i.e. my one Son, my only one—"my Son" *καὶ ἑξοχὴν* (comp. Ps. lxxxix. 27; Heb. i. 5). This day have I begotten thee. If it be asked, "Which day?" the answer would seem to be, the day when Christ commenced his redemptive work: then the Father "committed all judgment"—all dominion over creation—"to the Son" (John v. 22), gave him, as it were, a new existence, a new sphere, the throne of the world, and of all that is or that ever will be, in it (see 'Speaker's Commentary,' *ad loc.*).

Ver. 8.—Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance. A very small part of the heathen were the inheritance of David, and therefore the Messiah only can be spoken of in this verse. Before Messiah "all kings" were to "fall down; all nations to do him service" (Ps. lxxii. 11; comp. Isa. xlix. 22; lx. 3, 4; Matt. xxviii. 19, etc.). And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession (comp. Isa. lii. 10; Jer. xvi. 19; Micah v. 4; Zech. ix. 10; Acts xiii. 47).

Ver. 9.—Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. It is said that these words, and those of the next clause, "cannot describe the mild rule of Christ" (Rosemüller, De Wette, Hupfeld, etc.). But the objectors forget that there is a severe, as well as a

mild, aide to the dealings of God with his human creatures. St. Paul notes in the same verse both the "severity" and the "goodness" of God (Rom. xi. 22). Christ, though "the Prince of Peace," "came to send a sword upon the earth" (Matt. x. 34). As the appointed Judge of men, he takes vengeance on the wicked, while he rewards the righteous (Luke iii. 17; Matt. xxv. 46). Nay, St. John, in the Apocalypse, declares that "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. xix. 15; comp. ii. 27; xii. 5). So, with respect to the other clause of the verse—Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel—it is to be noted that there is a similar threat made by the Lord of hosts against Jerusalem in the Book of Jeremiah (xix. 11), and that under the new covenant the same is threatened in the Revelation (ii. 27). In truth, both covenants are alike in denouncing the extreme of God's wrath on impenitent sinners, such as those here spoken of.

Ver. 10.—Be wise now therefore, O ye kings. The remainder of the psalm contains the advice of the psalmist to the rebels of vers. 1—3, and to all who may be inclined to imitate them. "Be wise," he says, "be prudent. For your own sakes desist from attempts at rebellion. Jehovah and Messiah are irresistible. Ye will find it hard to kick against the pricks." Be instructed, ye judges of the earth. "Be taught," i.e., "by experience, if ye are not wise enough to know beforehand, that opposition to God is futile." Compare the advice of Gamaliel (Acta v. 38, 39).

Ver. 11.—Serve the Lord with fear. "If ye will not serve him (i.e. honour and obey him) from love, do it from fear;" "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cxi. 10). And rejoice. Do not be con-

tent with fear. Go on from fear to love, and so to joy. Good men "rejoice in God alway" (Phil. iv. 4). But such rejoicing must be with trembling; or, with reverence (Prayer-book Version), since no service is acceptable to God but such as is rendered "with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. xii. 28).

Ver. 12.—Kiss the Son. It is certainly remarkable that we have here a different word for "Son" from that employed in ver. 7, and ordinarily in the Hebrew Bible. Still, there is other evidence that the word here used, *bar*, existed in the Hebrew no less than in the Aramaic, viz. Prov. xxxi. 2, where it is repeated thrice. It was probably an archaic and poetic word, like our "sire" for "father," rarely used, but, when used, intended to mark some special dignity. Hengstenberg suggests that the writer's motive in preferring *bar* to *ben* in this place was to avoid the cacophony which would have arisen from the juxtaposition of *ben* and *pen* (פֶּן); and this is quite possible, but as a secondary rather than as the main reason. By "kiss the Son" we must understand "pay him homage," salute him as King in the customary way (see 1 Sam. x. 1). Lest he be angry. The omission of a customary token of respect is an insult which naturally angers the object of it (Esth. iii. 5). And ye perish from the way; or, as to the way. To anger the Son is to bring destruction on our "way," or course in life. When his wrath is kindled but a little; rather, for soon his wrath may be kindled (see the Revised Version). Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. The writer ends with words of blessing, to relieve the general severity of the psalm (comp. Ps. iii. 8; v. 12; xxviii. 9; xli. 13, etc.). (On the blessedness of trusting in God, see Ps. xxxiv. 8; xl. 4; lxxiv. 12, etc.)

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 8.—The kingdom and glory of Christ. "Ask," etc. We have the highest authority for regarding this psalm as a prophecy of the kingdom and glory of Christ. Interpreters labour in vain to fix on some occasion in Israel's history to account for its composition. No adequate explanation can be imagined of its scope and language but that given in Acts iv. 25 (comp. xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5). Vers. 10—12 would be blasphemous arrogance if spoken by and of a mere earthly king. Here is a declaration and a condition.

I. THE DECLARATION. 1. The voice of supreme authority. A grant of absolute dominion over the whole human race. This must be a Divine promise; else it were meaningless, impious (Ps. xxii. 28). Subordination is implied, as in 1 Cor. xv. 27, and in our Saviour's own declarations (John vi. 38; xv. 1). But not inferior nature. If it were—if Jesus were human only—then the gospel would have immeasurably lowered our position towards God; put us further away, instead of bringing us nigh. For under the old covenant, Jehovah himself was King and Shepherd of Israel. On the

other hand, the real *Manhood* of Christ is as indispensable to this Kingship as his Deity (see John v. 27). 2. Of almighty *power*. What God promises, he is able to perform. How? How is human freedom reconciled with Divine control of all things, from the counsels of kings (Prov. xxi. 1) to the sparrow's fall (Matt. x. 29)? A problem this that utterly defies human reason. But *practically* it is solved by faith and prayer (Phil. ii. 13; Dan. iv. 35). 3. Of Divine *faithfulness*. God's word is pledged and cannot be broken (Isa. xi. 9, 10). As matter of *right*, the kingdom is Christ's (Matt. xxviii. 18). It shall be so in *fact* (1 Cor. xv. 25) one day.

II. THE CONDITION. "Ask of me." 1. Our Lord Jesus personally fulfilled this condition, claimed the fulfilment of the promise, when he said, "I have finished," etc. (John xvii. 4; comp. Phil. ii. 9—11). 2. But Christ is one with "the Church, which is his body." As he by his intercession makes our prayers his own, so we are to make this great request ours. He has taught us to set it foremost in our prayers: "Thy kingdom come" (comp. Ps. lxxii. 15; and note the commencing fulfilment, Acts i. 14).

CONCLUSION. 1. The scope of Christian hope and effort is as wide as God's presence—it embraces the whole world (Matt. xxviii. 19; Gal. iii. 8). 2. God's promises await our prayers (John xvi. 23).

Ver. 12.—*The kiss of homage*. "Kiss the Son," etc. That is, the *Son of God*, spoken of in ver. 7. Our Saviour loved to call himself "Son of man," but he did not shrink from using also this name for which the Jews accused him of blasphemy (Matt. xi. 27; John ix. 35; x. 36; xix. 7). The kiss of friendly greeting, still the ordinary custom in many countries, is referred to in innumerable passages of Scripture. Else the traitor Judas had not dared so to crown his treachery. Jesus noted the neglect of the kiss of hospitality (Luke vii. 45); did not disdain the kisses showered on his feet by the weeping penitent. But the text speaks, not of any of these, but of the kiss of homage or worship.

I. THE SUMMONS. "Kiss the Son." Kings and judges of the earth (cf. Ps. cxlviii. 11) are summoned to do homage to "the Son" as "Head over all" (Luke v. 6). "Serve the Lord" (ver. 11) implies this homage. Why rulers? As representing the nations (vers. 1, 2). Civil power is God's ordinance (Rom. xiii. 1, etc.). Otherwise neither despots nor democracies could have any *right* to make and execute laws (though they may have *power*). Christ's kingdom is not a *kingdom of this world*; but he is the Ruler of nations as well as individuals (Ps. xxii. 28). Till this is practically acknowledged—the whole of human life, public and private, rendered obedient to Christ's law—the nations cannot be "blessed in him" (Gal. iii. 8; Rev. xi. 15).

II. THE WARNING. "Lest he be angry." The compassion, gentleness, tenderness of Jesus, are sometimes dwelt on to the exclusion of his majesty and righteousness (but see Matt. xxiv. 44, 50, 51; xxv. 31, etc.; Luke xix. 27). There is no more tremendous phrase in Scripture than "the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 16).

III. THE DOOM OF THE DISOBEDIENT. "Perish from the way." What way? The way of salvation—of God; of truth; of holiness; of peace; of life (Acts xvi. 17; Matt. xxii. 16; 2 Pet. ii. 2, 21; Isa. xxxv. 8; Luke i. 79; Matt. vii. 14; Prov. xv. 24). The most fearful punishment of sin is *incapacity for holiness*—spiritual death (Rev. xxii. 11). "Lest" is the awful shadow over the future, if you are rejecting Christ. "Now" is the sunshine on the path of faith and repentance (2 Cor. vi. 2; v. 20).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The King in Zion: a Messianic psalm*. A close examination of this psalm will show it to be at once prophetic and Messianic. Its date and author are not certainly known. The style rather points to David as the probable writer. To him especially the promise of a King who should reign in righteousness formed part of that "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." By faith in that covenant he foresaw him, who, being emphatically the Just One, should rule in the fear of God (see 2 Sam. xxiii. 2—5, where, as well as in this psalm, we have a remarkable illustration of what the Apostle Paul speaks of as the foresight evinced in the Old Testament Scriptures; see also Gal. iii. 8). In fact, we regard this psalm, though much briefer than

Isa. lili., yet as being as distinctly and clearly, yea, as wonderfully, Messianic as even that celebrated chapter of the evangelical prophet. Hence we regard it as affording as clear a proof of the guidance of a foreseeing Spirit, and of the facts of inspiration and of revelation, as are the starry heavens of the glory of God. For we know, as matters of fact, (1) that this psalm finds its fulfilment in Christ; (2) that it has been fulfilled in no one else; (3) that hundreds of years intervened between prophecy and event; and (4) that there are here not merely general statements, but numerous minute details which no human eye could possibly have discerned beforehand; so that we are shut up, by a severely intellectual process, to the conclusion that the author of this psalm is none other than he who sees the end from the beginning. This will, we trust, appear as we proceed to examine and expound it.<sup>1</sup>

**I. HERE IS AN ANOINTED ONE FORESEEN.** (Ver. 2.) "His Anointed." Who is this Anointed One? Let us see. Anointing was chiefly for purposes of consecration and inauguration. It signified the setting apart of the anointed one for God's service, and symbolized those heavenly gifts which were needed in its discharge. Priests, prophets, and kings were anointed (cf. Lev. iv. 3, 5, 16; vii. 35; 1 Kings xix. 16; 1 Sam. xvi. 12, 13; 1 Kings i. 39). There is in this psalm One referred to as the Anointed One. The Hebrew word for the Anointed is "Messiah." The Greek word, in its Anglicized form is "Christ." This Anointed One is the Son of God (see ver. 7). He is King (ver. 6). He has the nations for his possession (ver. 8). He is One before whom kings are to bow (vers 10—12). This cannot possibly be any other than the King of kings. To no one can the words of the psalm possibly apply but to him who is Lord of the whole earth, i.e. to the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Ps. cxxxii. 17; Dan. ix. 25, 26; Acts xvii. 3).

**II. RESISTANCE TO GOD, AND TO HIS ANOINTED ONE, FORETOLD.** This resistance comes (1) from the nations, and also from (2) kings and rulers. Five forms of resistance are indicated. 1. *Raging.* Tumultuous agitation, as when waves of ocean are lashed to fury. 2. *Imagining.* Meditating (same word as in Ps. i. 2). Turning over and over in the mind some plan of opposition. 3. *Setting themselves.* The result of the meditation in a resolution. 4. *Taking counsel together.* For combined action. 5. *Saying,* etc. Meditation, resolution, and concerted action taking effect in a verbal utterance: "Let us break their bands asunder," etc. (For the fulfilment of all this, see Matt. xxi. 33—44; xxiii. 31—35; John v. 16—18; vii. 1, 30, 45; viii. 40—59; x. 39; xi. 53, 57; xii. 10; xviii. 3; xix. 15, 16, 30; Acts iv. 24, 27.)

**III. RESISTANCE TO THE ANOINTED ONE IS FOLLY.** (Ver. 1.) *Why* do the nations rage? Vers. 4—6 foretell the utter discomfiture of the opponents, in four respects. 1. *The utter impotence of the assault would be matter for infinite ridicule and scorn.* (Ver. 4.) It were as easy for a spider to remove Mont Blanc from its base as for puny man to injure the Lord's Anointed One. 2. *The displeasure of God should trouble the opposers.* (Ver. 5; cf. Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.) Note how fearfully the imprecation in Matt. xxvii. 25 was fulfilled. Read the account in Josephus of the miseries that came on the Jews at the destruction of their city (cf. Acts xii. 1, 2, 23). 3. *The power of God would effect a mighty restraint, and even a complete destruction.* (Ver. 9.) See Spurgeon's 'Treasury of David,' vol. i. p. 29, for some admirable remarks on ver. 9; Dr. Geikie, in his 'Holy Land and the Bible,' vol. ii. p. 50, *et seq.*, for some strikingly instructive remarks on the pottery of the East; and also Dr. Plummer's extraordinary collection of historic facts on the miseries which have befallen the persecutors of the Church (in Spurgeon's 'Treasury of David,' vol. i. pp. 17, 18). 4. *The Anointed One would be enthroned in spite of all.* (Vers. 6, 7.) The seat of Christ's throne is called "my holy hill of Zion," in allusion to Zion as the city of David. Christ is the Son and Lord of David, and hence David's throne is the type of Christ's. Christ is now reigning in heaven. He is at once our Prophet, Priest, and King (see Acts ii. 22—36; iii. 13—15; iv. 10—12; Heb. x. 12, 13; 1 Cor. xv. 25).

**IV. WHATEVER MAY BE THE DECREES OF EARTH, THERE IS A DECREE IN HEAVEN,**

<sup>1</sup> See Fausset's 'Studies in the OL. Psalms,' lect. viii. 2nd edit., 1885; 'The Psalms,' by Dr. W. Binnie, new edit., 1886, pp. 339, 340; also Kirkpatrick's introduction to the Second Psalm in 'The Cambridge Bible,' 1891.

WHICH THE ANOINTED ONE DECLARES. (Vers. 7—9.) "I will declare the decree." The decree of the kings and rulers, which *they* resolve to carry out, is given in ver. 3; but I will tell of a decree from a higher throne. It has four parts. 1. *The Anointed One is to be the begotten Son of God.* (Ver. 7.) 2. *He is to have the sway over the whole world.* (Ver. 8.) 3. *He is to have this as the result of his intercession.* "Ask of me" (ver. 8.) 4. *His sway and conquest are to be entire and complete.* (Ver. 9.) If men will not bend, they must break.

V. THE HOLY GHOST CALLS FOR SUBMISSION TO THE ANOINTED SON OF GOD. This is set forth in five ways. 1. *Be wise.* Kings and judges are reminded that the only true wisdom is found in yielding to the Anointed One. There is no reason why he should be resisted. Resistance can end only in defeat. 2. *Be instructed.* Learn the Divine purpose and plan concerning the King in Zion. 3. *Serve the Lord with fear.* Not in servile terror, but in loyal reverence. 4. *Rejoice with trembling.* Be glad that the sceptre is in such hands. 5. *Kiss the Son.* Do homage, acknowledging his supremacy. This course is urged on them by two powerful pleas. (1) If they refuse, they perish from the way; *i.e.* they wander; they miss the way so seriously as to be lost; they perish as the result of being lost. Professor Cheyne's rendering is, "Ye go to ruin." (2) If they yield the Anointed One allegiance and trust, they will be happy indeed (ver. 12).<sup>1</sup>

Note: 1. It is very foolish to fret and chafe against the government of God. 2. All mankind are under Christ's sway, whether in this state of being or in any other. 3. Christ has a heart of love as well as a sceptre of power; and he rules to save. 4. Those who will not submit to the sceptre of Christ's grace must feel the weight of his iron rod. 5. True blessedness is found in submission to Christ; this blessedness is greater than tongue can express or heart conceive.—C.

Vers. 1—12.—*The heathen in three aspects.* I. AS SLAVES OF SIN. The condition of peoples varies. Civilization was more advanced in Greece and Rome than in other parts of the world. But though there may be superiority in some respects, with regard to the highest things there is no difference (Rom. iii. 9). What a terrible picture have we in this psalm of the crimes and violence and miseries that desolate the world, where "the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life" prevail, and not the Law of God!

II. AS OBJECTS OF DIVINE INTEREST. The Jews were in covenant with God as his peculiar people. But this did not imply that other peoples were unloved and uncared for. God has his purposes with regard to all the tribes and kindreds of the earth. Though they have forsaken him, he has not forsaken them. In their conscience they feel his presence. In the results of their actions they are subject to his Law. In their fears and darkness they are groping after him, and in their cruel rites and superstitions, consciously or unconsciously, they are declaring that without God they are without hope, and that the desire of their hearts is for his light and blessing. Things are dark and gruesome, but yet, in ways unknown to us, God is ruling over all, and working for the accomplishment of his own will and holy ends. The heathen are in God's hand. He promises to give them to Christ. All prayer and evangelistic effort should be founded on this: "Ask of me." Prayer is good; but prayer without work is vain. Have we the mind of Christ? Do our hearts yearn in love and pity over the multitudes who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death? Then let us plead God's word, and labour to carry out Christ's command (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

III. AS THE SUBJECTS OF MESSIAH'S KINGDOM. "Thine inheritance." 1. This inheritance is *moral*, not *material*. It is the people that God is concerned about. "All souls are mine." 2. This inheritance is obtained by *right*, and not by *might*. God "gives," not in an arbitrary way, but in accordance with law. There will be no forcing. The heathen must be won by truth and conviction if they are to be won at all. Hence there is scope for all reasonable motive and argument. 3. This inheritance is for *spiritual good*, not for *personal aggrandizement*. Empire has been often sought for selfish ends. If the heathen are given to Christ, it is not that they may remain in

<sup>1</sup> "To propose any mere earthly sovereign as the object of trust would be opposed to the whole tenor of Scripture" ('The Book of Psalms,' R.T.S., 1891).

their heathenism, but that they may be renewed in the spirit of their minds and receive the blessings of the gospel. The more that we ourselves, who have so many representatives among the heathen, recognize that the power we have as a nation is given us of God, and should be used as a sacred trust for God's glory and the good of the people with whom we have to do, the better for us all. Woe to us if we seek our own and not also the things of others, if we are eager to make gain and to advance our own selfish ends and forget the claims of our brethren, who as surely belong to Christ as we do, and for whom he died!—W. F.

**Vers. 2—6.—The false and the true in kingship.** There is a silent contrast throughout this psalm between the "kings of earth" (ver. 2) and "my King" (ver. 6).

**I. THE FALSE IS CHARACTERIZED BY SELF-SEEKING; THE TRUE BY SELF-SACRIFICE.** The false begin and end with self. They act from and for "themselves" (ver. 2). The true have regard to others, and are always ready to subordinate and sacrifice themselves for the good of others. In the one case it is the many for the one, the people for the king; in the other, it is the one for the many, the king for the people.

**II. THE FALSE RULE BY FORCE; THE TRUE BY RIGHTEOUSNESS.** "Bands" and "cords" mark the restraints of law, but the false care for none of these things. Might, not right, is their rule. Whatever stands in the way must give place to their ambitions. On the other hand, the true are animated by the spirit of justice. Instead of grasping violently what does not belong to them, they accept their place and use their powers as from God. They hold that the "decree" must be righteous to be respected—that the law must be just and good to commend itself to reason, and to command the obedience of the heart. Power that a man gains for himself he will use for himself, but power that is held as a trust from God will be wisely and rightly employed.

**III. THE FALSE IS MARKED BY CORRUPTION AND MISERY; THE TRUE IS PRODUCTIVE OF THE HIGHEST GOOD.** Great are the perils of power. Well did the Preacher say, "Oppression [i.e. the power of oppressing] maketh a wise man mad" (Eccles. vii. 7). If this be so with the wise, how much worse will it be with the unwise! The Books of Chronicles and Kings in the Old Testament, and the history of heathen and Christian nations, are full of proofs as to the evils of power wrongly and wickedly used. Crimes, revolts, revolutions, wars upon wars, with manifold and terrible woes, mark the course of the Pharaohs and the Nebuchadnezzars, the Herods and Napoleons of this world. On the other hand, the rule of the true is conducive to the highest interests of men. Their aim is to do justly and to love mercy. Their motto is, "Death to evil, life to good." "The work of righteousness is peace" (Isa. xxxii. 17).

**IV. THE FALSE ARE DOOMED TO FAILURE; THE TRUE TO VICTORY AND IMMORTAL HONOUR.** The rule of the false inevitably leads to ruin. Sin is weakness. Evil can only breed evil. Where obedience is given from fear, and not from love, it cannot last. Where homage is rendered for reasons of prudence, and not from conviction, it cannot be depended upon. Where there is not desert on the one hand, there cannot be devotion on the other. Empire founded on the wrong is rotten through and through. But the true reign after another fashion. Their character commands respect. Their government, being founded in righteousness, secures confidence and support. Their rule, being exercised for the benign and holy ends of love, contributes to the general good.

Two things follow. 1. God's ideal of kingship is found in Jesus Christ, and the nearer earthly kings resemble him, and the more perfectly they conform their lives and rule to his mind, the better for them and their subjects. 2. On the other hand, our first duty is to accept Christ as our King, and in love and loyalty to serve him. Thus we shall best fulfil our duty in all other relationships. The best Christian is the best subject.—W. F.

**Vers. 1—12.—The Divine King.** This psalm is supposed by some to have been written about the time of the coronation of Solomon. The heathen might then be the subject nations outside of Palestine, which threatened rebellion at this time. The seventh verse is applied to Christ in Heb. i. Let us use the psalm in this higher application of it to Christ.

**I. THE REBELLION OF THE WORLD AGAINST CHRIST. 1. Is an unrighteous rebellion.**

Rebellion against evil powers is a righteous thing. But Christ's rule is infinitely just and good and merciful. 2. *Is an unsuccessful rebellion.* "The people imagine a vain thing" if they think they can overthrow the rule of Christ. That belongs to the eternal order. The sea can shatter granite cliffs, but the throne of Christ is for ever and ever. 3. *Such rebellion recoils upon the heads of the rebels.* Every blow we strike against justice, love, and goodness rebounds upon ourselves; but we cannot injure God, however we may grieve his Fatherly heart.

II. CHRIST IS KING OF MEN. 1. *By Divine appointment.* (Ver. 6.) And therefore God is said to laugh at, deride, and utter his wrath in sore displeasure against those who oppose him (vers. 4—6). 2. *By Divine nature and character.* "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (ver. 7). The Divinest Being of all history, and, therefore, a King by the highest of all rights. 3. *A King by the actual and possible extent of his empire.* "I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance," etc. (ver. 8). He who has conquered a world is its rightful ruler. Christ is now worthy; but one day he will actually conquer the world.

III. THE UNAVOIDABLE INFERENCE. That we should be reconciled to God, and be at one with Christ. The wrath of God is unendurable, but "blessed are all they that put their trust in him."—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM III.

THIS psalm is entitled, "a Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son;" literally, "in his flight from Absalom his son." The historical correctness of the title has been questioned (Hitzig, *De Wette*), but without any sufficient reason. The Davidical composition is almost universally allowed. If it be asked at what time during the flight the psalm may be supposed to have been written, the best answer would seem to be that of Paulus, "on the eve of the battle which is described in 2 Sam. xviii. 1—8."

The composition is made up of three parts—a strophe, an antistrophe, and an epode, each terminated by the word *selah*. Some critics, however, make out four parts, by dividing the epode. But the absence of the word *selah* at the close of ver. 7 is against this.

Ver. 1.—Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! rather, *Lord, how numerous are they that trouble me!* We are told, in the Book of Samuel, that "the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom" (2 Sam. xv. 12), and again, "Absalom, and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him" (2 Sam. xvi. 15). Ahithophel proposed to attack David with twelve thousand men only (2 Sam. xvii. 1), but the actual number which went against him must have been far larger, for some twenty

thousand men, chiefly, no doubt, Absalom's partisans, fell in the battle (2 Sam. xviii. 7). Many are they that rise up against me; i.e. "that rebel against me, and rise up in arms to make war upon me" (comp. Ps. xviii. 48; xlv. 5; lix. 1, etc.).

Ver. 2.—Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. When Absalom first raised the standard of revolt, there were no doubt many who looked to see some signal Divine interposition on behalf of the anointed king and against the rebel; but when David fled, and with so few followers (2 Sam. xv. 18), and in his flight spoke so doubtfully of his prospects (2 Sam. xv. 26), and when no help seemed to arise from any quarter, then we can well understand that men's opinions changed, and they came to think that David was God-forsaken, and would succumb to his unnatural foe (comp. Ps. lxxi. 10, 11). Partisans of Absalom would see in David's expulsion from his capital a Divine Nemesis (2 Sam. xvi. 8), and regard it as quite natural that God should not help him. *Selah*. There is no traditional explanation of this word. The LXX. rendered it by *διψαλμα*, which is said to mean "a change of the musical tone;" but it is against this explanation that *selah* occurs sometimes, as here, at the end of a psalm, where no change was possible. Other explanations rest wholly on conjecture, and are valueless.

Ver. 3.—But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; or, *about me* (see the Revised Version). (For the sentiment, comp. Gen. xv. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 29; 2 Sam. xxii. 3; Ps. xxviii. 7; xxxiii. 20; lxxxiv. 9, etc.) The expression has peculiar force in David's mouth, who, as a "man of war," fully appreciated the

saving power of a shield. My glory (comp. Ps. lxii. 7). And the lifter up of mine head. As God had raised up David to the throne (2 Sam. ii. 4; v. 3), and prospered him in his wars (2 Sam. viii. 1—14), and exalted him above all the other kings of the period, so he was well able now, if he so willed, to restore him to his place and re-establish him in the monarchy (comp. 2 Sam. xv. 25; Pa. xliii. 3).

Ver. 4.—I cried unto the Lord with my voice; rather, *I cry unto the Lord with my voice*; i.e. earnestly and constantly (comp. Ps. lxxvii. 1; cxlii. 1). And he heard (rather, *hears*) me out of his holy hill; or, “the hill of his holiness” (comp. Ps. ii. 6). Though David is in exile at Mahanaim (2 Sam. xvii. 24), his thoughts revert to Jerusalem, to the holy hill of Zion, and the ark of God, which he has there “set in its place” (2 Sam. vi. 17); and he knows that God, who “dwelleth between the cherubim” (1 Sam. iv. 4), will hear him, though so far off. Selah (see the comment on ver. 2).

Ver. 5.—I laid me down and slept; literally, *as for me, I laid me down*, etc. A contrast seems intended between the king and some of his companions. “I, for my part,” he says, “confident in God, calmly laid me down and slept; I did not allow the danger which I was in to interfere with my repose at night.” Others, probably, were less trustful. I awoke. When morning came, i.e., I awoke, as usual, from quiet and refreshing slumbers. For the Lord sustained me; rather, *sustaineth me*. Now and always I am sustained by the Almighty.

Ver. 6.—I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people. (On the vast multitude of people that had collected to attack the fugitive king, see the comment on ver. 1.) David, however, did not fear them. Like Ass (2 Chron. xiv. 11) and Judas Maccabeus (1 Macc. iii. 18), he knew that there was no real might in “the multitude of an host” (Ps. xxxiii. 16). God could save equally with many or with few, and against many or against few (comp. 2 Kings vi. 15—17). That have set themselves against me round about; or, *ranged themselves against me*

(Kay)—a military term (comp. Isa. xxii. 7).

Ver. 7.—Arise, O Lord (comp. Numb. x. 35; Ps. vii. 6; ix. 19; x. 12; xvii. 13; lxxviii. 1). This call is generally made when God’s forbearance towards his enemies is thought to have been excessive, and his tolerance of sinners too great. Save me, O my God. David was in imminent danger. “All Israel” had come against him (2 Sam. xvi. 15). He was short of supplies (2 Sam. xvii. 29). He was doubtful how God was disposed towards him (2 Sam. xv. 25, 26). It was a time when, unless God would save, there could be no hope. Hence the intense earnestness of his prayer. For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone. Heretofore, i.e., thou hast always taken my part—thou hast smitten mine enemies, and given me victory over them, and by breaking their jaw-bones thou hast taken away from them all power to hurt (see Ps. lviii. 6). The reference is, of course, to David’s long series of victories, as those over the Philistines (2 Sam. v. 17—25; viii. 1), over Moab (2 Sam. viii. 2), over Hadsadezer, King of Zobah (2 Sam. viii. 3, 4), over the Syrians of Damascus (2 Sam. viii. 6), over the Edomites (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14), over the Ammonites (2 Sam. x. 7—14), and over the “Syrians beyond the river” (2 Sam. x. 16—19). Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly (comp. Job iv. 10; Ps. lviii. 6). The ungodly, enemies alike of David and of God, are represented as wild beasts whose weapons are their jaws and teeth. Let God break these, and they are harmless.

Ver. 8.—Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; or, *salvation is the Lord’s* (Kay). “To him alone it belongs to save or to destroy. Therefore is my prayer addressed to him, and him only” (see ver. 7). Thy blessing is upon thy people; rather, *let thy blessing be upon thy people*. “Whatever becomes of me,” i.e., “let thy people be blest” (Kay). David is not deterred, by the revolt of almost the whole people against him, from commending them to God, entreating God’s blessing upon them, and desiring their welfare. He echoes Moses (Exod. xxxii. 31, 32); he anticipates Christ (Luke xxiii. 34).

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 3.—*God the believer’s Glory.* “My Glory.” When Joseph said to his brothers, “Ye shall tell my father of all my glory,” he meant the dignity and power to which God’s wonder-working providence had raised him from the dungeon. In an hour it had suddenly become his; and any hour death might as suddenly bereave him of it. When God says, “My glory will I not give to another,” he speaks of that which is eternally, essentially, unchangeably his own. But in the text, faith boldly blends these two in one. It claims as portion no perishable glory, but the everlasting Creator himself. He



permits his creature, servant, child, to say, "Thou, O Lord, art . . . my Glory!" How may we Christians make these words our own? How may we make God our "Glory"?

I. BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. Knowledge is the key of power over nature. Man's pre-eminence over all lower creatures is in his intellect. The world pays homage to great thinkers and discoverers, who widen the sphere of human knowledge. But "thus saith the Lord" (Jer. ix. 23, 24; John xvii. 3; 2 Cor. iv. 6).

II. BY OUR BELONGING TO GOD. What honour attends even the infant children of a king! But the humblest Christian is a child of God (1 John iii. 1). What reverence is paid to relics, even of little value, that belonged to some great poet, statesman, warrior, etc.! But the poorest Christian is among God's jewels (Mal. iii. 17, where the Authorized Version is more nearly literal than the Revised Version).

III. BY CLAIMING HIS PROMISE. His pledged word is ours. Men glory in wealth that lays the world at their disposal; in a fortress no foe can seize; a victorious army; a matchless navy. What are these compared with the wealth, security, triumph, of trust in God (Ps. xxvii. 1; Prov. xviii. 10; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23)?

IV. BY LIKENESS TO GOD. (2 Cor. iii. 18; 1 John iii. 2.) This will be the glory of the Church for ever (Isa. lx. 19).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*A morning song in perilous times.* In this case, as in others, the words which in our version form the title of the psalm are in the Hebrew its first verse. And they enable us, with less than the usual uncertainty, to fix on the historic occasion on which it was written. This is one of those psalms which come under those in the first division of the introductory homily. It is an historical psalm, and as such it must be studied and estimated.<sup>1</sup> As an illustration of the way in which excellent men have turned aside from the obvious intent of a psalm to put fancied dogmatic meanings of their own into it, Luther's interpretation of this psalm is a choice specimen.<sup>2</sup> By such a process, men not only proceed on insecure bases, but they lose very much of the instruction which the historical psalms are calculated to afford. The evangelical truth which they think they find here is abundantly taught elsewhere; hence nothing is gained; while very much is lost by their failing to note the fine shades of personal experience, emotion, and character with which these psalms are marked. We have here one of the many priceless specimens of an Old Testament saint's experience—struggle, prayer, victory, song. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." And it has brought comfort to many a struggling soul in the hard conflicts of life, to find how believers in bygone times have gone through trials even sharper than their own. We note in this psalm five stages of personal experience.

I. PERIL. (Vers. 1, 2.) (In order to introduce this psalm vividly to the people, a preacher should study closely the historic incidents to which it refers.<sup>3</sup>) The writer was (1) compassed with foes; (2) surrounded with plots and snares; (3) scoffed at for his piety. "There is no help for him in God." Those who were plotting against him thought they had laid their plans securely, and that none could upset them. So it was with Daniel and with St. Peter. Note: If the people of God have to struggle hard with opposers and revilers, let them remember that they have had and shall have "companions in tribulation;" and that the experience of the saints of old, and of the course they adopted, is here recorded as a help for them.

II. PRAYER. (Ver. 4.) "I cried unto the Lord with my voice." The name of God

<sup>1</sup> "We can hardly be wrong in accepting the title, which states that the third psalm was written by David when he fled from Absalom his son, and the third psalm carries the fourth with it" (Kirkpatrick, 'Cambridge Bible,' p. 13).

<sup>2</sup> See Spurgeon's 'Treasury of David,' vol. i., *in loc.*, and also another view of the psalm by Cheyne (1888), who also omits the title. But he gives no reason either for the omission or for his view of the psalm as a national one. In his Bampton Lectures, Dr. Cheyne says that the Jewish Church, in whose name the psalmist speaks, did not exist in the days of David. What is his warrant for these statements?

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. xvi., xvii. See also the marvellous sketch in Dean Stanley's lectures.

used by the psalmist is the revealed name of Israel's redeeming God, *Jehovah*. Of the vast meaning of this name the scoffing heathen knew nothing. And now, when the world scornfully asks, "Where is their God?" they do so in entire ignorance of the blessed throne of grace to which the believer can repair. "With my voice"—while their voice defies God, my voice shall address God. The blessed reality of intercommunion with the infinite and eternal God, through his own appointed way of sacrifice and mediation, is one of which the carnal mind knows absolutely nothing. None laugh at prayer who understand what it is. Those who know God know well that he is a Refuge and a Hiding-place in any time of trouble.

III. RESCUE. *In God he has a Deliverer.* In three forms is this expressed, each one full of suggestiveness. 1. *A Shield.* The word means more than this, even a protection which compasses one around. 2. *My Glory.* The believer can make his boast in God, even when men are scoffing at the great Name. 3. *The Lifter-up of my head.* One who enables me to rise superior to my troubles, and to smile upon them. All these expressions show not only what God was to David, but what he is to the saints still. Note: Whether we sink in trouble or rise above it will depend on our faith and prayer. We may fetch such help from God as will enable us to "smile at the storm."

IV. FEARLESSNESS. 1. *In spite of all his foes, he could lie down and sleep.* How many a wakeful night would have become one of sweet repose if the troubled ones did but thus hide in God! As the little child sleeps away his griefs on his mother's breast, so we can have sweetest repose when we make God our Hiding-place. The prophecy is, "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind," etc. 2. *As he sleeps in holy calm, so he awakes in holy courage.* (Ver. 6.) "I will not be afraid," etc. (cf. Ps. xxvi., xlv.). The courage of David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, etc., may well be repeated in us. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" 3. *The answers to prayer already received strengthen his confidence for the future.* (Vers. 4, 7.) "He heard me," etc.; "Thou hast smitten all mine enemies,"<sup>1</sup> etc.; and because this has been so, his faith in future deliverances is confirmed.

V. TESTIMONY. The psalmist had prayed to Jehovah; he now testifies for him, as the result of his experience. 1. *Experience furnishes the best answer to the scorner.* In ver. 2 David quotes the words of the heathen, "There is no help for him in God;" but he knows better. He has tried what prayer will do. He has asked for help, and help has come. So that in direct opposition to wicked men, and as the result of positive knowledge, he can affirm, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord," i.e. (same Hebrew word as in ver. 2) "help" or deliverance. This, of course, would be true of salvation from sin, etc.; but that is not its reference here. It means deliverance or help in any time of trouble. 2. *Experience warrants a confident statement of the truth.* "Thy blessing is upon thy people." How rich this blessing (or favour) of God is cannot be told in words. Not even the Old Testament saints knew its fulness of wealth and glory. Not till such teachings as Rom. viii. 31—39 were known to believers was it possible that they should. Of this blessing it was then true, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him." And in Rev. vii. the double form of that blessing is given (see the present writer's homily thereon), viz. safe keeping now, while in the tribulation; and safe leadership out of the great tribulation, to the glory yet to be revealed!—C.

Ver. 3.—*Bright morning after a dark night.* I. THE SORROWS OF THE NIGHT. The darkness without images the darkness within. 1. There is the consciousness of danger.

<sup>1</sup> No difficulty ought ever to have arisen on the "morality" of such phrases in the psalms. They are the expressions of man, not words of God. And, when read in the light of the history to which they belong, it would be very strange if any should find fault with them; since no believer's thoughts and prayers can possibly rise above the measure of light to which that believer has attained. With our fuller light, we ought to rise above such expressions, but it is unseemly if we reflect disparagingly upon those who, in those early days and in such circumstances, uttered them. Old Testament morality is not to be measured by the expressions of this or that individual believer, any more than New Testament morality is to be measured by the letters of Cromwell.

Enemies are numerous. Thrice are they called "many." They are also strong and merciless—wild beasts that make the night hideous with their roaring. 2. Worse still, there is *the feeling of helplessness*. Friends are gone. Solitary and forsaken, all seems lost. There is no star of hope to break the gloom. The piteous cry of onlookers is echoed by our own hearts, "No help!" 3. But worst of all is *the sense of sin*. If conscience were clear, if we could say that trouble had come upon us without fault of our own, this might help us to be brave and patient. If all were right within, we might dare the rage of our enemies, and defy the babble of an idle world; but alas! it is otherwise. We have been foolish and disobedient. We have obstinately persisted in our own way, and have not set the Lord before us. Hence the heart sinks. At such a time the peril is great. We are on the brink of the gulf. Well for us if in our misery we turn to God.

II. THE JOYS OF THE MORNING. As the true light shines, we see things more clearly. We gain more self-control, and better thoughts arise. As from a troubled dream awaking, we look back with shame at our weakness and our fears. If the "many" are against us, "God is for us." This is enough. Therefore we put on the armour of light, and gird ourselves with invigorated strength and hope for the work of a new day. 1. *Refreshment*. "Slept." Body and soul have been benefited. We feel that virtue has come to us. It is of God. He giveth sleep. 2. *Renewed hope*. Another night is gone, and we are not only spared, but saved. If there is work to do, we have now the will to take it in hand. If there are difficulties before us, we have now the heart to face them with resolution. Our enemies may shoot at us, but God is our Shield. 3. *Anticipated victory*. (Vers. 8, 9.) We rise to a better conception of God. So far as we are in sympathy with him, we are in the right. So far as we are on the side of God, and fighting for him, we are strong and must prevail. His honour is concerned for our defence. What he has promised, he will surely perform. Alleluia! But let us take a word of *caution*. While we seek the destruction of evil, let us work for the salvation of our enemies. Also a word of *encouragement*. Relief does not always come, or does not come in the way we wish. The grief that saps the mind may be ours, the burden of care and trouble may lie heavy on our souls. The morning, which brings joy to others, may leave us still in gloom. Our very trials may be enhanced by contrast. The light once sweet to the eyes may now be bitter. The music and the flowers and the beautiful things of earth, that once brought us delight, may only aggravate our woe. Our interest in others may falter, and our capability for the duties of life may fail. But still let us hope in God. The morning cometh, and also the night; but for God's people there is the sure hope of the morning that will usher in eternal day.—W. F.

Ver. 6.—*The truth about numbers*. We have heard of the *vox regis*, and in these last days we are threatened with the equally dangerous and delusive *vox populi*. Let us consider—

I. NUMBERS DO NOT DETERMINE THE QUESTION OF RIGHT. There is a tendency with many to shirk responsibility. They look to others. Surely what the many say must be right. But this is folly. God has given us reason and freedom. We must judge for ourselves. Only what we know to be true can be truth to us; only what we feel in our consciences to be right can be binding upon us as duty. Besides, we see how often in the past the few have been in the right, not the many. Noah by his faith condemned the world. Elijah stood alone against the priests of Baal. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego dared the fiery furnace rather than bow with the multitude before the golden idol. Only when the people are all righteous can they be all right.

II. NUMBERS DO NOT DETERMINE THE QUESTION OF SUCCESS. No doubt there are times when numbers prevail. The few are crushed by the mere weight and force of the multitude. It has been said that "God is on the side of the biggest battalions;" but this is true in only a limited sense. Suppose the battalions are undisciplined or badly commanded, defeat may come instead of victory. But in the nobler fields—in the strife of truth and falsehood—how often has the victory been with the few, instead of the many! Besides, the question, in the deepest sense, is not—What will succeed? but—What is right?

“He is a slave, who will not be  
In the right, with two or three.”

Further, we must not measure success by the poor standards of this world. What seems failure to us may be victory in the sight of the holy angels and of God.

III. NUMBERS DO NOT DETERMINE THE QUESTION OF HAPPINESS. It is hard to stand alone. It costs a struggle to dare to be singularly good. But better far have peace within than sacrifice conscience to convenience, and freedom to popularity. St. Peter was happier shut up in prison than when, in fear of men, he denied his Lord. St. Paul was infinitely more calm and joyous when he stood before Nero than when, with all the authority of the Sanhedrin, he set out on his fierce crusade against the Christians. Better be true than false; better be free than the slave of opinion; better, with St. Stephen and the martyrs, press heavenwards through “peril, toil, and pain,” than follow a multitude to do evil.—W. F.

Vers. 1—8.—*David's dependence on God.* This psalm written by David at the time of Absalom's revolt, reminds one of the poet's lines—

“Most wretched men  
Are cradled into poetry by wrong;  
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.”

I. A COURSE OF AGGRAVATED TROUBLE AND DANGER. 1. *Caused by a tenderly beloved son.* And yet David never mentions him; a sign how deeply he was wounded. The silence tells more than speech would do. 2. *Not only his throne, but his life, was in danger.* See the account of David's flight in 2 Sam. xv. 3. *His enemies charge him with being abandoned of God.* As well as deserted by the people. His late sin with Bathsheba would make the charge plausible, and tend to shake his faith in God.

II. DAVID'S RESOLUTE FAITH IN GOD. 1. *Inspired by his past experience.* (Vers. 3, 4.) God had been his Defence, Inspiration, and Help in times past, in answer to his constant cries. “*Shield*” (Gen. xv. 1). “*Lifter up of my head.*” The head hangs down in trouble. “*Holy hill:*” Zion, where was the ark of the covenant. 2. *Inspiring a present sense of peace and security.* (Vers. 5, 6.) The Divine arm was his pillow, and he slept; the Divine hand raised him up, and he woke with such a sense of security that he was not afraid of the thousands that were encamped against him.

III. A PASSIONATE CRY FOR HELP AND VICTORY IN HIS PRESENT STRAITS. Urged again by an appeal to the past. “*Thou that didst save me from the teeth of the lion and the bear, and didst destroy mine enemies on every side, rise up now for me against them that rise up against me.*” “*Help me, O God!*” This is his courageous answer to the mocking exultation of his enemies when they say, “*There is no help for him in God.*” He replies, “*To Jehovah belongeth help,*” or “*the victory;*” help, not in this strait only, but help for the needy in all times and in all places.

IV. A NOBLE PRAYER FOR HIS MISGUIDED, REBELLIOUS SUBJECTS. He thought of the horrors of a civil war, and he forgot himself in his anxiety for the welfare of his people. This is royal and generous—when we in our utmost danger can cherish a deep concern for the safety of others. David reminds us of St. Stephen, who, with the spirit as well as the face of an angel, cried, “*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;*” and pre-eminently of him who said, “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*”—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM IV.

AGAIN the psalm has a title, “*To the chief Musician on Neginoth. A Psalm of David;*” literally, “*to the superintendent or foreman,*” which, in this instance, would be the choir-leader, or “*precentor*” (Kay). “*On Neginoth*” is supposed to mean “*for*

stringed instruments” (Hengstenberg, Kay, ‘*Speaker's Commentary*,’ Revised Version etc.); comp. Isa. xxxviii. 20. The authorship of David is generally allowed; but there is nothing to mark the exact circumstances under which the psalm was written. In its metrical structure it very much resembles Ps. iii., being composed, like that,

of a short strophe (vers. 1, 2), a short anti-strophe (vers. 3, 4), and a longer epode (vers. 5—8). The divisions are marked, as in Ps. iii., by the introduction of the word *selah*, perhaps meaning "pause," or "rest."

Ver. 1.—Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. Not "the God who imputes to me righteousness," as some render, but "the God who sees that I and my cause are righteous," and who will therefore certainly lend me aid. Thou hast enlarged me; or, *made room for me*—"set me at ease." In the language of the Old Testament, "straits" and "narrowness" mean trouble and affliction; "room," "space," "enlargement," mean prosperity. David has experienced God's mercies in the past, and therefore looks for them in the future (comp. Ps. iii. 7). When I was in distress; literally, *in [my] distress*. Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. This is David's usual cry, repeated in a hundred varied forms throughout the Psalms (see Psa. v. 2; vi. 2; ix. 13; xxvii. 7; xxx. 10, etc.).

Ver. 2.—O ye sons of men. "Sons of men"—*beney ish*—is not a mere periphrasis for "men." It is a title of some honour and dignity. Kay translates, "sons of the brave;" but that is scarcely the meaning. The phrase is rather equivalent to our "sirs" ('Speaker's Commentary'). How long will ye turn my glory into shame? By your misconduct. See the clause which follows. The appeal is, perhaps, to Joab, Abishai, and others of David's own party, whose proceedings were a disgrace to his reign, and tended to bring their master to shame rather than to honour. How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? i.e. after lying. Joab's treachery and falsehood were notorious (2 Sam. iii. 27; xx. 8—10).

Ver. 3.—But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself. The best order of the words would be, "Know that the Lord hath set apart for himself the man that is godly." The godly man is not contaminated by the evil doings of those who associate with him, and profess to act in his interest, if he neither authorizes nor condones their conduct. David had protested against Joab's proceedings on one occasion (2 Sam. iii. 28), and never at any time pardoned them (1 Kings ii. 5, 6). The Lord will hear when I call unto him. Although I am disgraced (ver. 2), resisted, in many ways brought to shame, by you, yet still I am God's servant, set apart to his service, and therefore I shall be heard by him. He will hearken to and grant my prayer.

Ver. 4.—Stand in awe, and sin not. The LXX. render, *Ὀρῶσθε καὶ μὴ ἀμαρτάνετε*, "Be ye angry, and sin not;" and this meaning is preferred by Dr. Kay, Hengstenberg, and others. It may also seem to have the sanction of St. Paul in Eph. iv. 26. If we adopt it, we must suppose the exhortation to be addressed mainly to David's own followers, who are warned against *excessive* anger and its natural result, undue violence (comp. 2 Sam. xvi. 9; xviii. 11, 14; xix. 21, etc.). Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still (compare St. Paul's injunction, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath"). Anger cools if a little time be suffered to pass—if a night be allowed for reflection, and no action be taken till the morrow. *Παύει γὰρ ὀργὴν ὁ χρόνος* (Aristotle). *Selah*. The second strophe being ended, another "pause" is to take place, during which the psalmist's exhortation may be made the subject of consideration.

Ver. 5.—Offer the sacrifices of righteousness. Sacrifices of victims are scarcely meant; certainly not, if the time of the composition is that of David's exile, since victims could be offered nowhere but at Jerusalem. We may suppose a reference to those sacrifices which are most truly "sacrifices of righteousness," viz. "a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart," which God "will not despise" (Ps. li. 17). And put your trust in the Lord. Sacrifice without faith is vain. Even "sacrifices of righteousness," to be of any service, must be accompanied by trust in the Lord.

Ver. 6.—There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Pessimists are numerous in all ages. Among David's adherents in his times of distress (ver. 1) would be many who doubted and desponded, anticipating nothing but continued suffering and misfortune. *They* would ask the question of the text. Or the scope may be wider. Men are always seeking for good, but not knowing what their true good is. David points it out to them. It is to have the light of God's countenance shining on them. Lord, lift thou up, etc.; compare the form of Levitical benediction (Numb. vi. 24—26), and see also Psa. xxxi. 1<sup>a</sup>. (xxx. 3, 7, 19. If we bask in the sunshine of God's favour, there is nothing more needed for happiness.

Ver. 7.—Thou hast put gladness in my heart. David is an example to the suffering ones. Notwithstanding his sufferings and calamities, God has looked on him, and so "put gladness in his heart"—a gladness which far exceeds that of his adversaries. Though they are in prosperity, and have their corn and wine increased, and enjoy all the "outward material blessings

promised to Israel—the wheat and the grape—for a supply of which he is indebted to the generosity of friends” (Kay), yet he would not change places with them. The spiritual joy which fills his own heart is preferable to any amount of material comforts and pleasures.

Ver. 8.—I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep (comp. Ps. iii. 5). His confidence in God enables David to lay himself down calmly and tranquilly to sleep, whatever dangers threaten him. He seeks his

couch, and at once (יִרְדּוּ) slumber visits him. No anxious thoughts keep him tossing on his bed for hours. For thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. David has a satisfaction in thinking that it is God *only* who watches over him. All other help would be vain, superfluous. God alone brought Israel through the wilderness (Deut. xxxii. 12); God alone established Israel in Canaan (Ps. xliv. 2, 3). David feels that he needs no second helper and protector.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 3.—*God's care for the righteous.* “But know . . . for himself.” A tone of solemn calm, like summer twilight, pervades this evening psalm, which naturally follows Ps. iii., a morning psalm. But here is no sound of war or peril from foes. The psalmist speaks, not as king to rebels, but as prophet to the “sons of men”—the unbelieving world. “My glory” (ver. 2) may be taken as in Ps. iii. 3. Idolatry turns worship from man’s most glorious to his most debasing act (Ps. cvi. 20; Rom. i. 23). Israel was a little isle of light amid heathen darkness. The psalmist warns his fellow-men—especially Israelites tempted by the gorgeous impure heathen rites—that idolatry is “emptiness” and “lies” (ver. 2). In contrast, he affirms two glorious certainties: (1) the righteous is God’s special care; (2) God does hear prayer.

I. THE RIGHTEOUS IS GOD’S SPECIAL CARE. “The Lord hath set apart,” etc. This is just the most offensive view in which salvation can be presented to a great many. They have no objection to a religion that deals in generalities, involves no personal distinctions, consists in doctrines which all can assent to, rites all can join in. But a sharp separation “between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not” (Mal. iii. 18) is intolerable to them. They resent it, as narrow, Pharisaical. Yet, on the reality and certainty of such severance, here and hereafter, the whole religious teaching of the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament alike, turns. You and I stand each in *personal relation* to God, for good or for ill. 1. “Set apart” by *forgiveness of sin*. Pardon is universally proclaimed (Luke xxiv. 47), but can be bestowed and received only personally (Matt. ix. 2). “He pardoneth and absolveth,” etc. (English Liturgy). True repentance and unfeigned faith are personal; so, therefore, is forgiveness. As it cannot be *collective*, so neither can it be *partial*. You are forgiven or not forgiven; reconciled or not reconciled (John iii. 36; 2 Cor. v. 20). 2. By *the illumination, guidance, strength, quickening and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit*. (Rom. viii. 9.) 3. Hence, by *practical discipleship; personal obedience*. (John viii. 12; xiv. 21—24.) “For himself.” No higher glory and happiness are conceivable than that promised (Mal. iii. 17). There is nothing narrow or arbitrary in this. God says, “All souls are mine.” But we have the fearful power of ignoring this claim, refusing God’s offers, disobeying his commands, despising his promises and warnings; practically denying our relation to him; and, if so, must take the consequences (1 John v. 12).

II. GOD DOES HEAR PRAYER. “The Lord will hear,” etc. This follows as an inference. 1. Such personal relationship to God would be impossible unless we can speak to him and be sure of an answer. Prayer is the natural language of faith; the obvious condition of pardon; the appointed means of obtaining the Holy Spirit (Luke ix. 9, 13). 2. Prayer is the expression and exercise of our personal relation to God (Ps. cxix. 73, 94). That God should invite and bring us into this personal relation, and then refuse to hold converse with us, is utterly incredible. It would be to deny himself. This is the testimony of experience. Reason says it *must* be so. Experience says it *is* so.

Ver. 4.—*Fear of sin.* “Stand in awe, and sin not.” There is no cowardice in being afraid of sin; no true courage in daring to break God’s Law and defy God’s anger.

Joseph was no coward, but a brave man, when he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" "Perfect love," St. John tells us, "casteth out fear, because fear hath torment." Here slavish fear is meant—the fear that drives men from God, makes them hypocrites, hating God all the more because they make believe to love him. But there is a fear which has no torment, but is akin to love, not love's foe; a fear that does not drive us from God, but makes us flee from ourselves to take refuge in him; a fear that has nothing base or weak in it, but ennobles and strengthens the soul.

"Fear him, ye saints, and you will then  
Have nothing else to fear."

To such fear our Saviour gives a place of honour and power among evangelical motives (Luke xii. 4, 5). Proposition: To point out some chief reasons for cherishing *the fear of sin*.

I. BECAUSE OF WHAT SIN IS IN REGARD TO GOD. 1. *It insults the majesty of God.* Sin practically denies the existence or else the authority of God; and puts scorn on his warnings, as though he means not what he says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Scripture represents sin as atheism (Ps. xiv. 1; Titus i. 16). Yet Plato was not correct when he thought *all* sin ignorance. Sin is often wilful, against light (Rom. i. 32; Luke xii. 47). There is a way of talking of the love of God which tends to rob love itself of all moral character. People talk almost as if they thought of the eternal Creator as the almighty servant-of-all-work of the universe, whose business is to minister to his creatures and make them happy, whether they obey him or not. Take away the *authority* of God, and you take away worship. How could we worship a Being who made laws to be kept or broken at pleasure, and uttered threats he never meant to fulfil; affixed nominal penalties, only to make his justice the jest of the universe? This is what sin would do, if allowed to run to its full length—what every wilful sin tends to. Imagine an insult publicly offered to the sovereign of this great nation. What indignation! Why? Because, in the person of the sovereign, the whole nation would be insulted and injured. But the Divine majesty does not *represent* the universe—is not derived from it. God is the sole Fountain of all that is glorious, noble, right, good, happy. 2. *Sin grieves God.* How can we think otherwise? He is "the Father of spirits." Does not he desire to see in every spirit the filial likeness, the image of himself? Scripture uses very bold language; but its strongest figures do not exaggerate, but fall below the truth (Gen. vi. 6; Amos ii. 13; Isa. xliii. 24). It was no light burden, no imaginary load, when the Son of God "bare our sins." We might go on to speak of how sin *robs God* by destroying all that is precious. But this leads to another reason for fearing sin.

II. BECAUSE OF WHAT SIN IS TO THE SINNER. 1. Sin breaks the inward law of man's nature; defaces God's image; destroys man's power to know God. People complain that the Bible is over-severe regarding sin; too hard on human nature in representing it as fallen, corrupt, dead. They forget the reason—the noble and lofty view the Bible takes of man. "A little lower than the angels;" "The offspring of the Godhead;" "Made in the image of God." A ruined hut is no great matter, but a palace in ruins is a woeful spectacle. We need not go back to Paradise. We see what human nature ought to be, and, but for sin, *would* be, in Jesus (Rom. viii. 3). 2. Sin is the bitter fountain of human misery; it is spiritual death. Sin must die, or we must die in our sins (John viii. 24; Rom. vi. 12, 21).

III. BECAUSE OF WHAT SIN IS TO OTHERS. Oh, the harvest of broken hearts, ruined lives, blasted hopes, wasted powers, desolate homes; of disease, agony, despair, death; which sin sows and reaps every day! "One sinner destroyeth much good." He perishes not alone (Josh. xxii. 20). This is a false proverb, "Nobody's enemy but his own." His own enemy is everybody's enemy. People gloss sin over with light words. One of the sweetest words in our tongue, "gay," is used as a perfume to drown the stench of the vilest sins. "He is only sowing his wild oats." *His?* Where did he get them? From what happy home did he steal them? Who gave him leave to steal them? What will be the harvest? and who will reap it? You say, "He will come all right by-and-by." Suppose he does; will those come right whom he has helped to mislead and ruin? "No man dieth to himself."

IV. Lastly, BECAUSE OF WHAT SIN HAS COST. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin" (1 John i. 7). What must sin be, if *that* is what was needed for its cleansing? Everywhere in the New Testament, side by side with the freest invitations of the gospel, stands the awful truth that he who knew no sin has been "made sin for us." "By his stripes we are healed." The cross is the mightiest persuasive to "stand in awe, and sin not."

Vers. 6, 7.—*The supreme quest of life.* "There be many," etc. Both the Church and the world were very different in David's day from what they were in our Lord's day; and in that from what they are to-day. But the contrast was as real, the opposition as strong. The cleavage between the party of God's will and the party of self-will went right through the heart of human life then, and does now. Consciously or not, we all rank on one side or the other. These words bring out the contrast very strongly as regards the supreme aim and quest of life.

I. THE WORLDLING'S MISTAKE. David looked out on the rush and bustle of life, and listened to the voices of the crowd. One cry came from all sides, "Who will show us any good?" Where can we find happiness? On all sides there is the same illusion and blunder—the notion that happiness means something outside us instead of within. It is the same to-day. Happiness, people think, can be purchased with gold, packed in bales and boxes, poured out of bottles, caught in crowds, assured by parchments duly signed. Everywhere are the broken empty cisterns, crying out against the folly of those who hewed them out; yet everywhere is the same din of hammer and chisel hewing out new ones, the same neglect of "the Fountain of living waters."

II. THE BELIEVER'S CHOICE. "Lift thou," etc. From the world, the psalmist turns to God. "Light" sometimes means knowledge (John xvii. 3; 2 Cor. iv. 6); but here rather the favour and manifested love of God. Smiles are the sunshine of the face, lighting up the inmost chambers of the heart (comp. Numb. vi. 25; Prov. xvi. 15).

III. THE SAINTS' EXPERIENCE. (Ver. 7.) The psalmist's prayer (ver. 6) was not for a *new blessing*—not a sudden aspiration. It was the outcome of experience. He contrasts the golden harvests and "rivers of oil" of him who has "much goods laid up for many years," but "is not rich toward God," with his own portion—*joy in the heart*; and feels that this is "the true riches." If he has not what the world calls "happiness," he has something infinitely richer—*blessedness*. The worldling's quest is like chasing a will-o'-the-wisp; the Christian's, like steering by the north star. If we have received God's greatest gifts, we may well trust him for the rest (Rom. viii. 32)

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*An evening song in perilous times, showing us the secret of happiness.* It is not difficult to be cheerful when we have everything we desire. But when life seems to be a series of catastrophes, disappointments, and vexations, buoyancy of spirit is not so easily attained. If our lives were in peril every moment through rebellion at home and plots and snares around, few of us would be found capable, under such circumstances, of writing morning and evening hymns. Yet such were the circumstances under which David wrote this psalm and the one which precedes it. Both of them belong, in all probability, to the time of Ahithophel's conspiracy, of Absalom's rebellion, when the king was a fugitive, *camping out* with a few of his followers. Such reverses, moreover, were none the easier to bear, when he had the reflection that because of his own sin the sword was in his house, and was piercing his own soul. Yet even thus, as he had "a heart at leisure from itself" to write his song of morning praise, so does he also pen his evening prayer.<sup>1</sup> We picture him thus: Any

<sup>1</sup> On the relation between Pss. iii. and iv., see Dr. Forbes's 'Studies on the Psalms' (1888), pp. 199, 200—a most suggestive and instructive work). What Dr. Cheyne means by thinking of this and the preceding one as Church psalms, we cannot imagine. There is not a trace of anything of the kind.



moment a fatal stroke may fall on him. His adversaries prowl around. They have rich stores of provisions and of gold, while he himself has to depend for the means of subsistence on supplies brought to his camp from without. Unscrupulous rebels were in power, while David and his host were like a band of men who are dependent on begging or on plunder. But it was precisely this combination of ills that brought out some of the finest traits in his character. Even then he can take up his pen and write, "Thou hast put gladness," etc.; "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Here, then, we have one of God's people, who has seen calmer days, writing in his tent and telling of a secret of peace and joy which nothing can disturb. It is a secret worth knowing. **Let us ascertain what it is.**

I. **HERE IS AN INQUIRY PUT.** "Who will show us good?" By which is meant, not so much—What is good in itself? as—What will make us happy, and bring us a sense of satisfaction? Over and above our intellectual, we have emotional faculties. The emotions are to the spiritual part of us what the sensations are to the bodily part. Among the various fallacies of some wise men of this world, one of the wildest is that emotion has no place in the search after, and in the ascertainment of, truth. It would be quite safe to reverse that, and to say that unless the emotions have their rightful play, few truths can be rightly sought or found. An equilibrium of absolute indifference concerning truth or error would be a guilty carelessness. Our craving after happiness is God's lesson to us through the emotions, that we are dependent for satisfaction on something outside us; and when such satisfaction is actually reached, it is so far the sign that the higher life is being healthfully sustained. Our nature is too complex to be satisfied with supply in any one department. Our intellectual nature craves the true. Our moral nature craves the right. Our sympathetic nature calls for love. Our conscious weakness and dependence call for strength from another. Our powers of action demand a sphere of service which shall neither corrupt nor exhaust. Our spiritual nature cries out for God, life, and immortality. Who can show us "good" that will meet *all* these wants? Such is the inquiry.

II. **THERE ARE THOSE WHO KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THE INQUIRY.** (Ver. 7, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart," etc.) The psalmist shows us: 1. *The source of his joy.* God—God himself. How often do the psalmists luxuriate in telling what God was to them—Rock, Shield, Sun, High Tower, Fortress, Refuge, Strength, Salvation, their Exceeding Joy! Much more is this the case now we know God in Christ. In him we have revealed to us through the Spirit nobler heights, deeper depths, larger embraces, and mightier triumphs of divinely revealed love than Old Testament saints could possibly conceive. 2. *One excellent feature of this joy* is the sense of security it brings with it in the most perilous surroundings (see last verse). (Let the Hebrew student closely examine this verse. He will gain thereby precious glimpses of a meaning deeper than any bare translation can give.) The psalmist discloses and suggests further: 3. *The quality and degree of the joy.* "More than . . . when their corn and their wine increaseth." (1) The gladness is of a far higher quality. A filial son's joy in the best of fathers is vastly superior to the delight a child has in his toys. So joy in God himself for what he is, is infinitely higher than delight in what he gives. (2) It is a gladness of greater zest. No joy in worldly things that a carnal man ever reached can approximate to the believer's joy in God. It is a joy "unspeakable, and full of glory." (3) It is a gladness remarkable for its persistency. The worldling's joy is for the bright days of life. Joy in God is for every day, and comes out most strikingly in the darkest ones—David, Daniel; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Peter, John, Stephen, Paul and Silas, etc. We never know all that God is to us until he takes away all our earthly props, and makes us lean with all our weight on him. (4) The believer's joy in God surpasses the worldling's gladness in the effects of it. It not only satisfies, but sanctifies the mind. (5) This joy never palls upon the taste. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

III. **THE PSALMIST SHOWS US HOW THIS JOY IN GOD WAS ATTAINED.** After his delights the worldling has many a weary chase. To ensure his, the psalmist sends up a prayer, "Lord, lift thou up," etc. This prayer had been taught him of old. It was a part of the priestly benediction (Num. vi. 22. *ad fin.*). Its meaning is, "Give us

the sign and seal of thy favour, and it is enough." Truly in this all else is ensured. Forgiveness from God and peace with him prepare the way for the fullness of joy. *Nothing is right with a sinful man till there is peace between him and God.* If our view of the chronology of the Psalms be correct, Psa. li. and xxxii. preceded this. If it be true that the believer attains the highest heights of joy, it is also true that he has first gone down into the deep vale of penitential sorrow. As in Christian toil, so in personal religion, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Let the sinner "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and then his hope, his joy, will begin.—C.

Vers. 1—8.—*Quieting thoughts for a time of trouble.* It is a mark of man's greatness that he can go out of himself. Some commune with nature, some with the great minds of the past, some with prophets and teachers of their own time. But the grandest thing is to commune with God. The evening is a fit time. Then we have rest; then we can retire from the stress and turmoil of the world, and in the secrecy of our hearts hold converse with God. Here we have some quieting thoughts for a time of trouble.

I. THAT GOD RULES OVER ALL. God is love. His Law is holy and just and good. Then it must be well with all those who do his will. There may be clouds and darkness, there may be grievous trouble; but God reigneth, and his truth and mercy are spread out as wings, under which we can always find refuge.

II. THAT IN FORMER STRAITS GOD HAS BROUGHT DELIVERANCE. (Ver. 1.) We can look back. It is sweet to remember God's loving-kindness. What he has done for us is not only a cause of thankfulness, but a ground of hope. His acts bind God as well as his promises. He does not change. Nothing can elude his eye; nothing can surprise his wisdom or baffle his power. He will bring enlargement in distress, room, breathing space, ampler freedom, and a diviner air.

III. THAT GOD IS AS ENTREATABLE AS EVER BY HIS PEOPLE. (Vers. 3, 4.) God does not tie his presence to place or ordinance. He regards character. There are times when he seems not to hear; but this is our infirmity. The throne of grace stands ever accessible. If we ask, we shall receive. We may be cast off and dishonoured by men; but God will never forsake those who trust in him.

IV. THAT TRUST IN GOD WILL SURELY BRING PEACE. (Vers. 5, 6.) Things may grow worse. Afflictions may come, not as single spies, but in battalions. For a time the machinations of the wicked may seem to prevail. But we know what the end must be. What can come from opposition to God but ruin? Reflection not only confirms our faith, but strengthens our attachment to God. The future of the wicked is dark; but the future of the righteous is bright as the heavens shining with countless stars. Whatever happens, therefore, let us hold fast to God. The priestly benediction (Numb. vi. 20) finds an echo in the trusting heart. "Peace."

V. THAT IN THE END GOD'S PEOPLE SHALL SURELY HAVE JOY IN GOD. (Vers. 6—8.) He is the supreme good, true, satisfying, inalienable, the everlasting Portion of the soul.

"O then bounteous Giver of all good,  
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown!  
Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,  
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away."

This psalm, as many others, ends with praise. Like the last strain of a cradle-song, its accents fall gently, lulling the child of God to rest. Luther, it is said, often sang himself to sleep with this psalm.—W. F.

Vers. 6—8.—*Three great things.* I. THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS. The feeling indicated is common. Amid disappointments and cares, evermore the cry is heard, "Who will show us any good?"

II. THE PRAYER OF PRAYERS. Somewhere there must be help. Gain, pleasure, worldly honours, and such-like, give no satisfaction. But when we turn to God we find all we need. He is gracious and merciful. Light and joy and peace beam from his countenance. Here we have the gospel preached beforehand.

**III. THE JOY OF JOYS.** The "joy of harvest" is proverbial. Here we have more, infinitely more. Not only rest from fear, and recompense for labour, and provision for the future; but this in the highest sense, spiritually and eternally—the Giver as well as the gift.—W. F.

**Vers. 1—5.—A cry for deliverance.** This psalm refers (according to some) to the same event as the previous psalm—that composed probably in the morning, and this in the evening, of the same day. We have in it—

**I. A CRY FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THE UNRIGHTEOUS PLOTS OF HIS ENEMIES.** The appeal is based upon two facts. 1. *His relation and fellowship with the righteous God.* Thou art my God, and the God of my righteous cause, and therefore thou wilt not leave me to the wicked designs of my enemies. 2. *His experience in former straits and troubles.* "Thou didst set me at liberty when I was in trouble." What thou hast done once thou wilt do again, because thou art unchangeable.

**II. THE SIN OF HIS ENEMIES.** 1. *They attempt to injure his personal and kingly honour (his glory).* By false and evil reports, so as to promote his overthrow and downfall. Character and office are the two most precious things that a man has to lose. 2. *They had set their hearts upon an enterprise destined to fail.* In love with vanity, they were in love with a vain, hollow appearance, such as this rebellious world turns out to be. Such is the nature of all unjust and sinful undertakings. 3. *It was an attempt to overthrow one of God's appointments.* (Ver. 3.) An attempt to set aside one of the Divine decrees; therefore—like trying to upset a Divine law—utterly vain and futile.

**III. AN ADMONITION TO REPENTANCE.** Not a cry for vengeance. The way of repentance is here pointed out. 1. *The thought of God was to fill them with an awe of their sin.* If they blasphemed God's anointed, they were to stand in awe of God. 2. *They were to examine the thoughts of their hearts in solitude.* On their bed, in the darkness of the night, and in the privacy of their chamber. "Shut to thy door," etc. 3. *They were to offer sincere and truthful "sacrifice," or service to God.* Like Zacchæus, "The half of my goods," etc. Good works are the best evidence of repentance. 4. *They were to trust in the righteous God, and not in their unrighteous aims and objects.* We become like the persons or things we trust in.—S.

**Vers. 6—8.—The believer's ground of confidence.** David now turns from admonishing his enemies to the case of his companions in trouble, who saw no ground of hope in the visible aspect of things.

**I. THE DESPAIR OF UNBELIEF.** "Who will show us any good?" No one can. 1. *The grandest revelations are made to the mind, and not to the senses.* The question, therefore, is beside the mark. God, Christ, immortality, justice, love, holiness, cannot be shown in visible material form. Christ showed them for a season. 2. *The good that can be shown can work no cure of life's greatest evils.* It is the inward deliverances, not the outward, that we most need. Talent, money, position, health, cannot work these.

**II. THE HIGHEST GOOD COVETED BY THE BELIEVER IN GOD.** "Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." As the sun lights the world. 1. *Then we become intensely conscious of God.* The thought of him fills every faculty and solves every problem. "In his light we see light." 2. *Then we know that he is our Helper and Saviour.* For what is the light of the Divine face?—the light of Fatherhood and love? The light of the warrior's face is that of courage; of the poet's and prophet's, inspiration; of the judge's, that of absolute justice; but the light of God's face is that of an infinite abundance of love for all his children.

**III. THE SUPERIORITY OF THIS GOOD OVER THE RICHEST MATERIAL PLENTY.** (Ver. 7.) 1. *It creates a Divine joy and gladness.* The excitement of the senses wears out the body and corrupts the mind; but the joys of the heart and mind impart the highest strength and the noblest impulses. Therefore "be not drunk with wine, . . . but be filled with the Spirit." 2. *It gives a deep inward peace.* (Ver. 8, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep.") An intense consciousness of God and his favour has power to tranquillize the mind that is most disturbed by inward or outward trouble. It can calm the greatest storm, because we know the centre of rest, and are reposing upon it.

3. *It gives a sense of security.* (Ver. 8, "For thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.") He needed no guards to ensure his safety during sleep, because God was nigh. "Who is he that can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" But "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." If we perish by shipwreck, or in battle, or railway accident, we are still in God's hands, and ought to trust in him. This is faith in God—to trust him in the darkness as well as in the light.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM V.

THIS psalm is assigned by some to the time of Manasseh, but contains nothing that is really opposed to the superscription—"A Psalm of David"—since, before the temple was built, the tabernacle was called "the temple" (Josh. vi. 24; 1 Sam. i. 9; iii. 8; 2 Sam. xii. 20). It is thoroughly "Davidic in style, concise, vigorous; with rapid transitions of thought and feeling" ("Speaker's Commentary"). With respect to the time in David's life whereto it should be assigned, there are no very distinct indications. It was not while he was in exile, for he had ready access to the house of God (ver. 7); nor was it in the later years of his life, when he had no open adversaries. Perhaps "a short time before the revolt of Absalom, when David was aware of the machinations of conspirators against him under a bloodthirsty and treacherous chief" is the most probable date. The psalm is not marked by any notes of division, but seems to consist of five parts: (1) a morning prayer (vers. 1—3); (2) a warning to the wicked (vers. 4—6); (3) a renewed prayer (vers. 7, 8); (4) a denunciation of woe on the wicked (vers. 9, 10); and (5) an anticipation of blessings and favour for the righteous (vers. 11, 12). The superscription, "To the Chief Musician upon Nehiloth," is thought to mean, either, continuously, "To the Chief Musician, for an accompaniment of wind instruments;" or, discontinuously, "To the Chief Musician: a Psalm upon inheritances." In the latter case, the respective "inheritances" of the wicked (ver. 6) and the righteous (vers. 11, 12) are supposed to be meant.

Ver. 1.—Give ear to my words, O Lord (comp. Ps. lxi. 1; lxxvi. 6). Cries of this kind are common with the psalmists, even when they do not express the purport of their prayer. Consider my meditation; or,

*my silent musing* (Ray); comp. Ps. xxxix. 3, where the same word is used.

Ver. 2.—Hearken unto the voice of my cry (comp. Ps. xxvii. 7; xxviii. 2; lxiv. 1; cxix. 149; cxxx. 2; cxl. 6). The Oriental habit of making requests in loud and shrill tones is the origin of these forms of speech. My King. David was "king" over Israel; but Jehovah was "King" over David (comp. Ps. x. 16; xxix. 10; xlv. 4; xlvii. 6, etc.). And my God (see Ps. lxxxiv. 3). For unto thee will I pray. To thee, *i.e.*, and to no other.

Ver. 3.—My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord (compare "At evening, and at morning, and at noonday will I pray, and he shall hear my voice," Ps. lv. 17; and see also Ps. lix. 16; lxxxviii. 13; cxix. 147). The appointment of daily morning and evening sacrifice (Numb. xxviii. 4) pointed out morn and eve as times especially appropriate for prayer. A natural instinct suggested the same idea (Job i. 5). In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee. The repetition adds force to the implied injunction (comp. Ps. cxxx. 6). The word translated "direct my prayer" means "arrange" or "set in order," as the priests did the altar before a sacrifice (Lev. i. 7, 8, 12; vi. 5; Numb. xxviii. 4). Prayer is viewed as a sort of sacrificial act. And will look up; or, *look out*—keep on the watch—in expectation of my prayer being granted (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 4.—For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness. Thou wilt listen to the prayer of a righteous man (Ps. iv. 1), since thou dost not delight in wickedness, but in goodness. Neither shall evil dwell with thee. Light has no fellowship with darkness. Evil men can obtain no support from thee, who art All-holy. They will scarcely venture to ask thy aid.

Ver. 5.—The foolish (or, *the arrogant*—"the boasters") shall not stand in thy sight. Rather shall they be cast down and dismayed (Ps. lxxiii. 3, 18). Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. David has in mind the wicked and presumptuous men who have banded themselves together against him, and "take his contrary part" (Ps. cix. 3, Prayer-book Version). These he is sure that God hates.

Ver. 6.—Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing (comp. Ps. iv. 2). David's adversaries were cunning, treacherous, and quite regardless of truth (see 2 Sam. iii. 27; xiii. 28; xv. 7—9; xx. 10, etc.). God's vengeance was sure to fall upon them, either in this world or in the next. The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. An individual seems to be pointed at, who is probably Abithophel.

Ver. 7.—But . . . I will come into thy house; rather, *unto thy house*. David, as a layman, would not be entitled to enter within the tabernacle. He would draw near to it, probably bring his offering, and then worship toward it (see the following clause). In the multitude of thy mercy; or, *through the abundance of thy mercy* (comp. Ps. lxix. 13, 16). It was by God's mercy that David lived, that he was maintained in health and strength, that he had a desire to go to God's house, and was permitted to worship there. Of all these mercies he is deeply sensible. And in thy fear will I worship. David's worship is never without fear—a reverent sense of God's greatness, power, and perfect holiness. Toward thy holy temple. "David would, according to the custom of the worship then established, turn himself in the time of prayer to the place where the gracious presence of the Lord had its seat" (Heugstenberg; comp. Pss. xxviii. 2; cxxxviii. 7; 1 Kings viii. 30, 33, 38, 42, 44, 48; Dan. vi. 10; Jonah ii. 4).

Ver. 8.—Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness. Here at last we find *what David prayed for*. Previously, we have only heard him entreat that his prayer may be heard (vers. 1, 2), declare that he will pray early (ver. 3), and before the tabernacle (ver. 7); now we learn what his prayer is. It is that God will lead him in the path of his righteousness—that righteousness of which he is the pattern, and whereof he approves; and will "make his way plain for him," *i.e.* show it him clearly, so that he cannot mistake it. God is asked to do this, especially because of David's enemies, or of "those that lie in wait for him" (Revised Version margin), lest, if he were to make a false step, they should triumph over him, and so he should bring discredit upon the cause of God and of his saints. Make thy way straight (*plain*, Revised Version) before my face. Not so much "smooth my way," or "make it level" or "easy," as "put it plainly before me" (comp. Ps. xxv. 5; and Ps. xxvii. 11, "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies").

Ver. 9.—For there is no faithfulness in

their mouth; or, *no stead-fastness*—"no sincerity" (Kay, Cheyne); see the comment on ver. 6. Their inward part is very wickedness; literally, *wickednesses*; *i.e.* nothing but wickedness. Their throat is an open sepulchre. "Emitting the noisome exhalations of a putrid heart" (Bishop Horne). They flatter with their tongue; literally, *they make smooth their tongues*, which may, perhaps, include flattery, but points rather to smooth arguments, specious reasonings, and the habit of making the worse appear the better cause (see the comment of Bishop Horsley, 'Book of Psalms,' vol. i. pp. 154, 155). The last two clauses of this verse are quoted by St. Paul (Rom. iii. 13), and applied generally to the character of the ungodly.

Ver. 10.—Destroy thou them, O God; rather, *condemn them, or declare them guilty* (Kay); *κρίνον αὐτοὺς* (LXX.). Let them fall by their own counsels. No condemnation naturally follows punishment. David assumes that God will make his enemies fall; he prays that they may fall from the effect of their own counsels. The fate of Abithophel (2 Sam. xvii. 23) perhaps fulfilled this imprecation. Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; *Thrust them out* (Revised Version); "Thrust them down" (Kay). Punish them at once, in the midst of their many transgressions. For they have rebelled against thee. They have sinned, not against me only, but equally—nay, far more—against thee.

Ver. 11.—But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice. David is fond of contrasts. Here he sets the lot of the righteous over against that of the wicked. While the wicked "fall," and are "cast out," or "thrust down" to hell, the righteous "rejoice"—nay, *ever shout for joy*, displaying their feelings in the true Oriental manner. Because thou defendest them. There is no "because" in the original. The passage runs on without any change of construction, "Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, and do thou defend them; and let them that love thy Name be joyful in thee."

Ver. 12.—For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous. All the joy of the righteous springs from the fact that God's blessing is upon them. The sense of his favour fills their hearts with rejoicing. With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield. *Tsinmah* (צִנְמָה) is the large, long shield that protected the whole body (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. p. 445). God's favour, thus encompassing a man, effectually secured him against all dangers.

## HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 1—3.—Prayer.** “Give ear,” etc. There are prayers, some of the most fervent and spiritual, which refuse words, and need not language (Rom. viii. 26). But God, who hath given speech as the glory of our nature and the principal instrument of human progress, will have us consecrate it to this highest use—converse with our Maker, the Father of our spirits.

**I. PRAYER IS PERSONAL CONVERSE WITH GOD.** “My voice shalt *thou* hear” (ver. 3). On this turns the whole reality, efficacy, spiritual benefit, of prayer. **1. Reality.** We are not speaking into the air; or to an Infinite Impersonal Power that takes no heed; but to the living God. “He that planted the ear,” etc. (Ps. xciv. 9). To the Father of spirits (Luke xi. 13). **2. By efficacy** of prayer we mean, not that prayer has a virtue or power of its own, not that God needs *instructing* what to give, or *persuading* to give. The very power to pray comes from him. But the *earnest desire* and pleading request of his children have real value in his sight; as *they must* have, if “God is love.” True, God knows what we need, better than we do; but fervour of desire, perseverance and patient faith in asking, accompanied with childlike resignation to his will, are often the very conditions of its being wise and right (*and therefore possible*) for God to grant what we ask. **3. The spiritual benefit** of prayer is no doubt its chief blessing. Nothing else could bring the soul so near to God. But this benefit turns on its reality and efficacy. God might have given promises without inviting or permitting us to pray; but faith *claims* and *pleads* his promises in prayer.

**II. PRAYER SHOULD HAVE ITS SET SEASONS**, though it should not be confined to any. “In the morning,” i.e. every morning. Our day should begin with God (comp. Ps. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10).

**III. THE HABIT OF PRAYER MUST BE MAINTAINED BY HOLY PURPOSE, STEADFAST RESOLVE.** “Will I direct,” etc.; order and arrange it, gathering up all my powers to this great employment, this glorious privilege, as happy as holy. God’s ear is not chained to a careless prayer, of which the offerer himself makes no account.

**Vers. 4, 5.—God’s hatred of sin.** “Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness,” etc. It needs courage to preach the severe side of Bible truth. Time was when preaching could not be too severe. Men loved to hear the thunder and see the fire of Sinai. Now it cannot be too flattering and soothing. A view of Divine love is current, not to say fashionable, which tends to reduce it to an easy-going apathetic tolerance, taking little account of the difference between moral good and evil. We need reminding that in God’s judgment the opposition is irreconcilable, infinite, eternal. These verses strongly set forth *God’s hatred of sin*.

**I. GOD’S HATRED OF SIN IS INSEPARABLE FROM HIS HOLINESS.** Having no “pleasure in wickedness” stands here for abhorrence, unchangeable opposition. Were it possible to conceive “a God that hath pleasure in wickedness,” this would be the most terrible, hateful, and hideous of all imaginations—an Omnipotent Fiend! Even a wicked man must see that such a thought is monstrous. But if all sympathy with evil is thus abhorrent to the Divine character, the very thought revolting, it follows that sin must be infinitely hateful to God. *Not* to hate sin is characteristic of a bad man (Ps. xxxvi. 4); he finds in himself no standard by which to test and hate it. “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil!” (Ps. xcvii. 10).

**II. GOD’S HATRED OF SIN DOES NOT CONTRADICT HIS LOVE**, but is inseparable from it. Because “God is love,” he must desire the happiness of his creatures. But men are created to be happy through holiness. Sin poisons the very source of human happiness; fills the world with strife, injustice, cruelty, vice, disease, want, pain, tears, death. Where would Divine love be if our Maker calmly looked upon the destruction of all that is best in his creatures, and the wholesale wreck of human happiness? Again, because “God is love,” he must desire the love of his children. Love asks love. Sin robs God of his children’s love; robs them of the very power of loving him, and of all the joy that can spring only from his love. Because “God is love,” he must desire men to know him and converse with him; and in this communion grow up to their true spiritual stature (Eph. iv. 13). Sin tends to banish the knowledge of God from

earth; to dry and choke the channel of communion with God (John xvi. 13; Rom. i. 20, 21, 28; Eph. iv. 18).

III. HOW CAN HATRED OF EVIL BE RECONCILED WITH LOVE TO THE WRONG-DOER? How separate sin from sinners—the sinner from his sin? The gospel is the answer. By the atonement of the Son of God, and by the renewing power of the Holy Ghost (Rom. v. 8; Titus iii. 5, 6; 1 Cor. vi. 11). The Old Testament Scriptures contain abundant promises of pardon to the penitent; and one wonderful example in King Manasseh (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; Ps. xxxii.; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13). But Law, and fear of punishment, were necessarily predominant till “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” On the other hand, never forget that if the *sinner will not and cannot be separated* from his sin, the New Testament is fully as severe as the Old (Matt. vii. 23; xiii. 49, 50; Rom. ii. 8, 9). The cross, which reveals God’s love to sinners, is at the same time the most tremendous of all witnesses against sin (Rom. viii. 3, 4).

Ver. 11.—*The joy of faith.* “Let all those . . . rejoice,” etc. People who look on Bible religion as gloomy and joyless would do well to study the Book of Psalms. It is worth note that in this one book of Scripture the words “joy,” “joyful,” “glad,” “gladness,” “rejoice,” occur more than ninety times. Truly the “river that maketh glad the city of God” is a full, pure, deep-flowing stream. Idle mirth, empty-headed and hollow-hearted gaiety (Eccles. vii. 6), you do not, indeed, find characterizing the psalmists or prophets. But for full-hearted, clear-voiced joy—the joy that sings on its pilgrim-way because it sees the rainbow in the cloud, and hears the Saviour’s voice in the storm—there is no joy like that which the text speaks of—the *joy of faith*.

I. IT IS A GREAT JOY TO TRUST GOD. Trust is an indispensable element of a happy life. A suspicious, distrustful soul is like one walking in a fog, chilling, perplexing, distorting. One of a trustful nature who has no one to trust is like a lonely traveller, hungry and homeless. Mutual confidence is essential to love or friendship worthy the name. But the most faithful, loving friend may disappoint trust through weakness, ignorance, calamity, forgetfulness. Only the all-wise, all-loving, almighty, unchangeably faithful God is worthy of absolute trust—the perfect rest of the soul (Isa. xxvi. 3).

II. TRUST IN GOD IS FULL OF JOYFUL EXPECTATION. It lights up the future (else dim and dark) with the sunshine of certain hope. “We know,” etc. (Rom. viii. 28). Care is the heaviest burden of life; to-morrow weighs heavier to most men than to-day; and this burden faith rolls off on to God (1 Pet. v. 7; Isa. xliii. 2).

III. TRUST IN GOD IS FULL OF JOYFUL EXPERIENCE. If it is joy to trust God, it is double joy to find by experience that he accepts the trust he invites; rewards the faith that lays hold on his promise. Joshua’s experience is the experience of faith in all ages (Josh. xxiv. 14). St. Paul could say at the end of his course, “I know whom I have believed,” etc. (2 Tim. i. 12; iv. 7, 8).

IV. THE GOSPEL HAS OPENED A NEW AND FULLER FOUNTAIN OF JOY, by supplying a firmer foundation of faith, and clearer knowledge of God, in the Person of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. i. 8).

CONCLUSION. If you have no joy in God, it must be because you do not know him; and this is because you do not believe him as speaking to you in his Son. Yet let no Christian despond if his joy in God be not what he desires, what he hears or reads of, what it reasonably should be. If we have not sunshine, let us be thankful for daylight. If even daylight, for a while, fail, let us remember Isa. l. 10, and “watch for the morning” (Ps. cxxx. 6).

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*A morning prayer: for sanctuary service: in evil times.* This psalm seems to have been written for, or handed to the leader of a special choir, that he might adapt music for its use in sanctuary worship; not necessarily that of the temple—for its composition was probably anterior to the erection of that building—but for use in the services of that temporary structure which preceded it, and which, though but temporary, and even fragile in a material sense, was nevertheless in a high and holy

sense the dwelling-place of God, yea, "the palace of the great King."<sup>1</sup> Note: No material splendours of gold, silver, and precious stones can make a temple without the Real Presence; but however humble the structure, the Real Presence therein will make it a temple of God. Whether David was actually the penman of this psalm or no, matters not. It is evidently the composition of a true saint of God, and reflects in its several verses the spirit of the time and circumstances under which it was written. And not only so. But it shows us that the saints of olden time were wont to regard the house of God as a house of prayer, and to let their prayers be an unburdening of the heart to God on every matter of immediate and pressing concern. Note: In our prayers in God's house we have no need to include everything in one service. Nor are we bound to use the words of another's prayers, except as far as they suit our case at the time. Still less need we rack and tear such a psalm as this to find in it the whole gospel. That would not only be a strange anachronism,<sup>2</sup> but we should even lose very much by missing the historic setting and aim of the psalm. Who cannot find comfort in the obvious fact that the Old Testament saints, in their prayers, used to tell God everything, just as it seemed to them, and as they felt about it? There is no greater boon in life than to have a friend who will never misunderstand us, and to whom we can tell *anything*, knowing that he will hide all our folly in his loving forgetfulness, and sympathize with all our cares. Such perfection of friendship is found in God alone. And we have in this psalm a beautiful illustration of the use which the psalmist made thereof.

I. THE PSALMIST LAYS THE ENTIRE SITUATION BEFORE GOD. (Vers. 8, 9, "mine enemies," equivalent to "those that lie in wait for me.") The whole of the ninth verse shows the treachery and hollowness that mark the hostile bands, and the consequent peril in which the people of God were on that account. (This verse is one of those quoted by the Apostle Paul in proof of human depravity. Nor is there any contrariety to reason in his so doing. For while the psalm speaks of all this wickedness in its relation to society, St. Paul speaks of similar wickedness in its relation to the Law of God and to the God of law. And it is because the psalmist knows how foreign to the nature of God all this iniquity is, that he brings it before God in prayer, and asks him to put it to shame.) Note: Let us learn to pray minutely, and not to lose ourselves in generalities.

II. IN DOING THIS HE RECOGNIZES AN ENDEARING RELATION. (Ver. 2.) "My King," "my God." God was not a far-distant Being, only remotely related. The name "Jehovah" brought him near as Israel's redeeming God; and that very name, which removes us infinitely from anthropomorphism, was the one in which the saints of old found their joy and glory. They could call God *their* God. Under the New Testament our thoughts of God may be more sweet and endearing still.

III. HE OBSERVES A DEVOUT AND WISE METHOD IN HIS PRAYER. "In the morning I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." The meaning is—I will order it accurately,<sup>3</sup> and then look out to see whether it has sped, and when the answer will come. (Many of the old divines are very felicitous in their treatment of these two words.) Sometimes, indeed, the yearning Godward is too deep for outward expression (see ver. 1, "consider my meditation," i.e. understand my murmuring). "Lord, read the desires of my heart by thine all-piercing eye—and interpret my petitions in thine own loving-kindness before they rise to my lips." Happy they who know that they have a God with whom they can thus plead, and who have learned the blessed art of thus pleading with God!

IV. HE SETS HIS APPLICATION ON SUBSTANTIAL GROUNDS. (Vers. 4—6.) The psalmist knows the character of God, and the righteousness of his administration; and in these verses he shows us how real was the revelation on these great themes which God had given in his Law (see Ps. ciii. 6, 7). All these glorious disclosures of the holiness of God are reiterated and confirmed in the teaching and redemption of the Son of God. (For the specific phrases, see the Exposition; also Perowne and Cheyne.) It is because we know what God is, and the principles of his government,

<sup>1</sup> See Perowne and Cheyne on ver. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Although for devotional suggestiveness Spurgeon's 'Treasury of David' is priceless, yet anachronisms abound therein; and the student must read the book very warily.

<sup>3</sup> "One of the first duties of the priest at dawn was to lay the wood in order for the morning sacrifice" (Perowne).



that we can under all circumstances commend ourselves, the Church, and the world to him.

V. ON SUCH GROUNDS THE PSALMIST OFFERS VARIED PETITIONS. 1. *For himself.* (Ver. 8.) Beautiful! He wants (1) to go along God's way, not his own; (2) to be shown clearly what that way is; and then (3) to be led along that way. He who thus puts himself into God's hand, wanting only to be led aright, shall never be put to shame. 2. *For the people of God.* (Ver. 11.) He prays that in the midst of the whirl and tumult which surround them, the righteous may ever ring out a peal of joy because of God's protecting care and love. 3. *For evil ones.* (Ver. 10.) He prays that they may be (1) held guilty and condemned for their transgressions. Yea (2), rejected by God, even as they had themselves rejected God. We are not bound to imitate the psalmist in such petitions. Jesus Christ tells us that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest of Old Testament prophets. They could not rise above the level of their inspiration, nor advance in prayer beyond the point their understanding had reached in those days.<sup>1</sup> For us it would be far more appropriate to pray for the conversion of God's enemies by the power of his love and grace.

VI. THERE IS HERE A CONFIDENT ASSURANCE EXPRESSED. (Ver. 12, "Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous . . . as with a shield.") The word means, not a small shield which may be held out to ward off a dart, but a large buckler which can cover one around as with armour. So effective are the Divine protection and care with which he guards his own. May such protection ever be ours!

VII. IT IS WORTHY OF NOTE AT WHAT HOUR OF THE DAY THIS PRAYER IS OFFERED. We are twice told in the third verse, "in the morning." The early morn, when the frame is freshest and the spirit freest, is the best time for devotion. The early hours, when sanctified by prayer, will help us to sanctify the whole day for God. Before ever we look upon the face of man, let us catch a morning smile from our Father in heaven—and we shall find how true it is that—

**"His morning smiles bless all the day."**

O.

Vers. 1—12.—*A morning prayer.* Every new day the priests began anew the service of God in the temple. The altar was set in order, the lamb was made ready, and as soon as the sign of day was given the morning sacrifice was offered (Lev. vi. 5; Numb. xxviii. 4). In this there was a lesson for all times. Every new day calls for a fresh consecration of ourselves to God. "When first thine eyes unveil, give thy soul leave to do the like" (Vaughan). In this morning prayer we find—

I. FAITH IN GOD'S FATHERLY CHARACTER. The cry, "Give ear," is that of a child to its father. The priests stood for others. They offered sacrifices not only for themselves, but for the people. But for us there is but one Priest and one Sacrifice. Through Christ we have access to God as our Father, and can cry to him for help in every time of need (Eph. ii. 16; Heb. iv. 16).

II. CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S HOLY RULE. (Vers. 3—7.) The psalmist speaks of what he knows. God is just and holy. The more we think, the more will our confidence grow. We rise from the faith that God is our Father, to the grand belief that he is "King," and that he will defend the right. But let us keep in mind what sin is. Some in these days make light of sin. It is an inherited weakness, a necessary evil for which circumstances are to be blamed more than the sinner. These and such-like excuses are made, and, if this is not enough, it is said, "Somehow things will come right. If not here, yet in the future world all will be well." To such the "wrath" of God is but a figure of speech, and "hell" the invention of our slavish fears. Against all such dangerous teaching, let us place the wholesome doctrine of the psalmist and of our Lord.

III. EXPECTATION OF GOD'S GRACIOUS INTERPOSITION. (Vers. 8—10.) Help is needed, and earnestly implored. The cry is not for mere personal ease or comfort, but for such deliverance as shall be for God's glory. The soul is in sympathy with

<sup>1</sup> See footnote to Ps. iii. 7. This is a case in which the application of the rules of a natural psychology and of historic setting avails to throw light on petitions which are mysterious, and which for us would not be justifiable.

God, and can not only pray, but "look up" with the patience of hope. 1. *Guidance.* (Ver. 9.) We confess our weakness; but we cast ourselves on God for help. He is our Shepherd. We trust his love, and surrender ourselves to his leading. It is for him to go before; it is for us as his sheep to hear his voice and follow him. 2. *Defence.* (Ver. 11.) When Luther was asked at Augsburg where he should find shelter if his patron, the Elector of Saxony, deserted him, his answer was, "Under the shield of Heaven." This shield is for all. Other defences may fail; but here we are safe from all the assaults of the enemy. 3. *Blessedness.* (Ver. 12.) God is pledged to his people by his character as well as by his covenant. Trust in him awakens joy—pure, ardent, comforting, not like the joy of the fool (Eccles. vii. 6), but real and abiding, as God's Name. Trust also calls forth praise. What Jeremiah said in the pit, God's people say in the sunshine, "O Lord, there is none like unto thee." They are as Naphtali, "satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord" (Deut. xxxiii. 23). Therefore they sing, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy Refuge" (Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27).—W. F.

Vers. 1—7.—*Prayer for deliverance from wicked men.* The psalmist prays to be delivered from, not open persecution, but the scoff and scourge of the tongue at all goodness and service to God. When irreligion prevails, it is difficult to resist it and stand firm in our allegiance to God.

I. THE CRY FOR HELP AGAINST THE PREVAILING IMPIETY. 1. *He prays God as the Highest to hearken to his meditations, his words, and his cry.* All true prayer begins in thought or meditation, goes on to express itself in uttered words, and rises at last into an earnest cry. Not till we muse on our own needs and difficulties does the fire of devotion burn; then do we break into earnest pleading, and deep, if not loud, cries. 2. *The urgency and eagerness of his suit.* In the morning, at the earliest opportunity, at the time of the morning sacrifice in the temple, do I wait upon thee with my prayer. Urgent matters take precedence of all others, and we cannot rest till we set about them. 3. *He waited expectant for the answer to his prayer.* (Ver. 3.) "Watched"—or looked out, not "up"—to see what came of it, and how it would be answered. This is both natural and reasonable; for God has promised to answer true prayer.

II. THE GROUND OF HIS PRAYER. God is the righteous God, and as such: 1. *He has no sympathy with the ways of the wicked.* (Ver. 4.) Not when they seem to prosper—in trade, politics, or open irreligion. And they seem to prosper only for a time. 2. *God has no fellowship with the irreligious.* (Ver. 5.) "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight," or before thee, as favoured courtiers stand in the presence of a king. God has no gracious intercourse or communion with wicked men. Therefore I can ask for his help with confidence; for he is gracious to the righteous. 3. *The false and the cruel are doomed to perish.* (Ver. 6.) Their own devices destroy them; that is God's appointment. God's action is commonly by law, and not by personal interference; he abhors and destroys men by the opposition of his laws to all deceit and cruelty.

III. THE FREEDOM AND AWE OF THE PSALMIST IN DRAWING NIGH TO GOD. (Ver. 7, "I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy loving-kindness.") The wicked cannot stand in thy sight; but I can. Note: 1. *The freedom and confidence of true worship.* He feels the infinite mercy and privilege of enjoying access to God. 2. *The arm of God felt in all true worship.* "In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." When freedom and reverence are blended, then is our worship the truest and most acceptable.—S.

Vers. 8—12.—*The righteousness of God.* This second strophe of the psalm is very much like the first in substance, the matter running parallel with vers. 3—7. The fundamental thought on which all is based is that of the righteousness of God. The whole prayer is framed on that conception.

I. A PRAYER FOR RIGHTEOUS DELIVERANCE AND GUIDANCE. 1. *For righteous guidance.* "Lead me in thy righteousness; make thy way [the right way] plain to me." 2. *For righteous deliverance.* The unrighteous lay in wait for him—threatened his safety. There was "no faithfulness in their mouth;" they used slander and

treachery when they dared not use open violence. Their inward part, their souls, were full of evil designs and purposes. "Their throat is like an open sepulchre," which yawns for his destruction. Their speech, fair and smooth, to flatter and put him off his guard and lure him on. With them, mouth, heart, throat, and tongue are all instruments of evil; and their malice was such that he needed the care and guidance of the righteous power above.

II. A PRAYER FOR RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION. (Ver. 10.) *Punish*. "The word properly signifies such a decision and judgment as would show and manifest what sort of neighbours they are when their ungodly dispositions are disclosed and every one is made known." Show them guilty. Let them fall *through* or *because* of their own counsels. Their counsels are of such an evil nature that they must in the end ensure their destruction. By means of their transgressions thrust them away—the same thought in substance as the last. But the great argument for retribution is—they have rebelled against thee. The enemies of the psalmist are the enemies of God. God's cause and that of his people are the same. "Whoso toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye;" "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

III. PRAYER FOR THE REALIZATION OF A RIGHTEOUS JOY. (Vers. 11, 12.) This joy proceeds: 1. *From the sense of refuge and defence we have in God.* 2. *From the love we have to God, for his goodness and righteousness.* 3. *From the knowledge we have that God does assuredly bless the righteous.*—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM VI.

THIS is the first of what have been called "the Penitential Psalms." It has been said that "there is much of grief in it, but nothing of penitence." The grief, however—such grief (see ver. 6)—can scarcely be supposed to have arisen from any other source than consciousness of sin. And grief of this kind is a main element in penitence. The title ascribes the psalm to David, and declares it to be addressed, like Ps. iv., "to the Chief Musician on Neginoth," by which we are probably to understand that it is intended to be set to an accompaniment of stringed instruments (see introductory paragraph to Ps. iv.). The further statement, that it is to be "upon Sheminith," is very obscure, but perhaps refers to some form of musical time (see Hengstenberg). The psalm seems to divide into four stanzas—the first and last of three, the intermediate ones of two verses each.

Ver 1.—O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger. The psalmist begins by deprecating God's wrath and displeasure. He is conscious of some grievous sin, deserving rebuke and chastisement, and he does not ask to be spared his chastisement; but he would fain be chastised in love, not in anger (comp. Jer. x. 24, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing"). Neither chasten

me in thy hot displeasure; or, in thy wrath. In its primary sense, *hamah* (חָמָה) is no doubt "heat," "glow;" but the secondary sense of "anger," "wrath," is quite as common.

Ver. 2.—Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak; rather, *I am faint, or languid*—withered away, like a faded plant or flower. O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. Bodily ailment seems certainly to be implied; but it is that sort of bodily ailment which is often produced by mental distress—a general languor, weariness, and distaste for exertion (comp. Ps. xxii. 14; xxxi. 10; xxxviii. 3; cii. 3).

Ver. 3.—My soul is also sore vexed. It is not, however, the body alone which suffers; the soul also is vexed, and vexed *greatly* (גָּדוֹל). Clearly the main emphasis is intended to be laid on the mental suffering. But thou, O Lord, how long? We may fill up the ellipse in various ways: "How long wilt thou look on?" "How long wilt thou hide thyself?" "How long wilt thou be angry?" (see Pss. xxxv. 17; lxxix. 5; lxxxix. 46). Or again, "How long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?" (Hab. i. 2). The cry is that of one wearied out with long suffering (comp. Ps. xc. 13).

Ver. 4.—Return, O Lord. God seemed to have withdrawn himself, to have forsaken the mourner, and gone far away (comp. Ps. xxii. 1). Hence the cry, "Return" (comp. Pss. lxxx. 14; xc. 13). Nothing is so hard to endure as the feeling of being deserted by God. Deliver my soul. "The psalmist feels himself so wretched in soul and body, that he believes himself to be near death"

(Hengstenberg). His prayer here is, primarily, for deliverance from this impending danger, as appears clearly from the following verse. Save me for thy mercies' sake. Either a repetition of the preceding prayer in other words, or an enlargement of it so as to include salvation of every kind.

Ver. 5.—For in death there is no remembrance of thee (comp. Ps. xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 11; cxv. 17; cxviii. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 18). The general view of the psalmists seems to have been that death was a cessation of the active service of God—whether for a time or permanently. they do not make clear to us. So even Hezekiah, in the passage of Isaiah above quoted. Death is represented as a sleep (Ps. xiii. 3), but whether there is an awakening from it does not appear. No doubt, as has been said ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 182), "the cessation of active service, even of remembrance or devotion, does not affect the question of a future restoration," and the metaphor of sleep certainly suggests the idea of an awakening. But such a veil hung over the other world, under the old dispensation, and over the condition of the departed in it, that thought was scarcely exercised upon the subject. Men's duties in this life were what occupied them, and they did not realize that in another they would have employments—much less form any notion of what those employments would be. The grave seemed a place of silence, inaction, tranquillity. In the grave (Hebrew, *in Sheol*) who shall give thee thanks? (comp. Ps. cxv. 17, 18).

Ver. 6.—I am weary—or, *worn out* (Kay)—with my groaning. The Oriental habit of giving vent to grief in loud lamentations must be remembered. Herodotus says that at the funeral of Masiatis, the Persians present "vented their grief in such loud cries that all Bœotia resounded with the clamour" (Herod., ix. 24). All the night make I my bed to swim (comp. Homer, 'Od.,' xvii. 102, 103). The Revised Version has, "every night," which is a possible meaning. Dr. Kay translates, "I drench my bed." I water my couch with my tears. One of the usual pleonastic second clauses.

Ver. 7.—*Mine eye is consumed because of grief; or, mine eye is wasted away because of provocation.* The eye falls in, becomes dull, and, as it were, "wastes away" through long-continued grief (comp. Ps. xxxi. 9). The kind of grief expressed by the word *ka'as* (כַּאֵס) is "that which arises from provocation or spiteful treatment" (Kay). It waxeth old because of all mine enemies. It becomes dull and heavy and sunken, like the eye of an old man. How often has it not been noted that nothing so much *ages* a man as grief!

Ver. 8.—Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity! Note the sudden change of tone, very characteristic of the Davidical psalma. The psalmist, having offered his prayer, is so certain of its acceptance that he at once turns upon his adversaries with words of reproach, and almost of menace. "Depart from me!" he exclaims; "get ye gone! do not dare any more to persecute me or plot against me! Your efforts are in vain." For the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. David speaks from an inward conviction. He knows that he has prayed sincerely and fervently. He is certain, therefore, that his prayer is heard and accepted.

Ver. 9.—The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive—rather, *hath received*; *ὑποδέξατο* (LXX.)—my prayer. The threefold repetition marks the absoluteness of the psalmist's conviction.

Ver. 10.—Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed; rather, *all mine enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed* (Rosenmüller, Kay, and others). Shame will fall upon David's enemies when their plots have failed, and deep vexation when they find him restored to health (ver. 4) and in the full enjoyment of the Divine favour. Let them return; rather, *they shall return*; i.e. "retire," "turn their backs," "take to flight." As Hengstenberg says, "David sees his enemies, who are gathered around him for the attack, all at once in alarm give way." And be ashamed suddenly. It is doubly shameful to have to fly when one has been the assailant.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 9.—*The school of adversity.* "The Lord hath heard," etc. This outburst of triumphant gratitude is like a sunbeam out of a dark, stormy sky. A wail of profound sadness echoes through the earlier portion of the psalm. In his deep affliction the psalmist seems to lose sight of the light beyond; he sees but the dark silence of the grave (ver. 5). Suddenly the clouds part; faith revives; the conviction that God is the Hearer of prayer fills his soul with joy, and with the certain hope that God will answer.

I TROUBLE IS THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER. In trouble even prayerless souls are often taught to pray (Psa. lxxviii. 34; cvii. 6).

"Eyes that the preacher could not school  
By wayside graves are raised;

And lips say, 'God be merciful!'  
That ne'er said, 'God be praised!'

(Mrs. Browning.)

But even prayerful Christians have to own that there is no prayer like that we offer in trouble. In prosperity prayer is apt to be vague, like an arrow shot skyward from a slack string. Prayer in trouble is like an arrow shot from a full-bent bow—straight at the mark. David's prayer was intensely personal, "*my* supplication;" urgent, "the voice of my weeping;" persistent, "all the night" (ver. 6); seizing hold on God's mercy as its plea (ver. 4). Even our blessed Lord learned this lesson (Heb. v. 7).

II. Therefore, ONE PRINCIPAL BLESSING OF AFFLICTION AND STRONG CONSOLATION under it is this—that thus our Father is teaching his child to pray. Our Lord teaches this lesson (Luke xi. 5, etc.; xviii. 1, etc.). Never lose hold of this truth in darkest trouble, for without this it will be dark indeed—meaningless, hopeless, comfortless. The Lord *has* heard your prayer in the way of taking note of it—knows more about it than you do yourself. Therefore he *will* hear in the way of sending an answer: if not the exact answer you wish and expect, then something better. So St. Paul's thrice earnestly repeated prayer was answered with a refusal richer in grace and love than if his petition had been granted (2 Cor. xii. 7—9).

Observe: If we lived nearer to God, more in the spirit and habit of prayer, in peaceful prosperous days, we might perhaps the less need to be taught in this sharp school.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The moan of a saint, and the mercy of his God.* For the significance of the title of this psalm, see the Exposition. An expositor well remarks that the confessed uncertainty on the part of the best Hebrew scholars as to the meaning or many of the titles is a striking proof of their antiquity, since it shows that the clue thereto is lost in oblivion. This psalm belongs to those specified under the first head of our introductory homily, as one of those in which we have the strugglings and wrestlings of a saint in devotional exercises; not the words of God to man, but the words of man to God, and as such they must be studied. We must not fall into the anachronism to which in our last homily we referred, of interpreting a psalm like this as if it had been written in full New Testament light; for we shall see as we proceed abundant indication of the contrary. Yet there is here a priceless record of an early believer's experience, from which troubled souls through all time may draw an abundance of comfort.<sup>1</sup> Here are—a moan, a prayer, a plea, an issue.

I. THE MOAN. It is not that of an impenitent man; at the same time, it bears no very clear indication of being a penitential wail over sin. It is the plaint of one who is overwhelmed with sorrow—with sorrow that has come upon him through his enemies. So intense is his anguish that it haunts him by night and by day; it exhausts his frame, consumes his spirit. Note the various expressions: "withered away," "bones vexed," "sore vexed," "weary with groaning," "make my bed to swim," "water my couch with my tears," "eyes dim," "eyesight wasting away," etc. What caused such overwhelming sorrow, we cannot tell. But this is of no consequence. The point to be noted is this—there are not unfrequently times in the experience of God's people when some care, or trouble, or perplexity is felt, and that so severe that they are haunted by it night and day; they cannot shake it off; and they cannot, even when at prayer, forget it. What are they to do? Let them not try to forget it; let them turn their prayers in that direction, so that the perplexity and the prayer are concurrent and not contrary forces. This is what the psalmist did.<sup>2</sup> This is what we should do.

"Give others the sunshine; tell Jesus the rest."

II. THE PRAYER. It is twofold. 1. *Deprecatory.* (Ver. 1, "Rebuke me not," etc.;

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cheyne says of this psalm, "The speaker is either the pious Israelite personified, or a representative righteous man, who feels the sins and sufferings of his people as his own." There is not a word in the psalm to indicate anything of the kind. All the phrases show a strictly personal sorrow.

<sup>2</sup> An excellent book by Mr. Sheppard, entitled 'Thoughts on Private Devotion,' has a most helpful chapter on this topic. It is a pity such books should get out of date.

"nor chasten me in thine hot displeasure.") Here is one of the traces of the Old Testament saints' thinking about God: they regarded their afflictions as indications of God's anger. We are now taught rather to regard them as a part of the gracious training which our Father sees that we need. The sharpest trials often force out the most fervid prayers; yet, at the same time, we are permitted to cry to our Father to ask him to deal gently with us, and to "throw away his rod," since "love will do the work." 2. *Supplicatory*. "Mercy," "healing," "deliverance," "salvation,"—for these he pleads. Probably his yearning is mainly for temporal relief<sup>1</sup> and deliverance from his foes. But we, under similar circumstances, as we know more than the psalmist did, should rise higher than he could. We should regard temporal deliverances as entirely subordinate to the higher spiritual improvement, which ought to be earnestly prayed for as the result of every trial. We should always be more anxious to have our trials sanctified than to have them removed.

III. *THE PLEA*. This also is twofold. 1. *The psalmist feels that his burden is so great, it will soon bring him to the grave, if not removed*. Hence he says, "In death there is no remembrance of thee; and in Sheol who shall give thee thanks?" Here is another proof that, in dealing with this specimen of the devotion of an Old Testament saint, we have to do with one to whom, as yet, life and immortality had not been brought to light; to whom death was but the passage to a dim and gloomy state of being; although, as we shall see in dealing with Pss. xvi., xvii., there was the hope of an awakening. Still, "Sheol," the all-demanding realm, was not as yet lit up with gospel light. The Greek word "Hades" and the Hebrew word "Sheol" both refer to the state after death, though under different symbolic expressions.<sup>2</sup> Historically, there are three conceptions of Hades, or Sheol. (1) The pagan: all gloom and no hope. (2) The Hebrew: gloom, with hope of a blest awaking in the morning. (3) The Christian: no gloom at all, so far as the godly are concerned. "Absent from the body; at home with the Lord." Hence we cannot now adopt ver. 5 of this prayer, knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him; that hence our death is the gateway to rest, and that the time of our departure may be peacefully left in wiser hands than ours. 2. *The psalmist grounds a second plea on the loving-kindness of God*. This is better, surer ground (ver. 4). Very often is this plea used. It cannot be used too often. It takes hold of God's strength.

IV. *THE ISSUE*. 1. *The psalmist receives an answer to his prayer*. (See Ps. xxxiv. 6.) Thousands can say the same. "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." 2. *Consequently*, there is: (1) New confidence Godward (ver. 9). "The Lord will receive my prayer." As he has done in the past, so he will continue to do.<sup>3</sup> New courage manward (ver. 10, Revised Version). Yea, by prayer the spirit is calmed. Trouble is turned to rest, fear to bravery, and despair to hope. Note: How much care and worry good people would save themselves if they did but take all their troubles to God *at once*, without waiting till they obtained such hold upon them! (2) It is infinitely better to tell God everything, than to go about moaning and groaning to our fellows! God knows all. He never misunderstands us. He knows exactly how to help us. He will help us, at the right moment, in the best way, and to the full extent of our need; yea, he will do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."—C.

Vers. 1—10.—*A cry to God, and its response*. I. *THE CRY OF THE FAINTING SOUL*. Circumstances are adverse. There is gloom without and within. Conscience accuses. God seems full of wrath. Death is regarded, not as a release, but as the minister of judgment; and the grave, not as a quiet resting-place, but as a "pit," loathsome and

<sup>1</sup> Though Rübiger goes too far when he says that the supplication of the psalmist has not in view deliverance from sin: many petitions in the Psalms disprove such a strong statement. See 'Theological Encyclopædia,' vol. ii. p. 142 (Clark).

<sup>2</sup> See the writer's exposition of Rev. i. 18 ('Pulpit Commentary'). To the Hebrew the main thought of the after-world was that of "the all-demanding realm;" hence the word "Sheol." To the Greek, it was "the unseen world;" hence the word "Hades."

<sup>3</sup> See a study on prayer, entitled, "Liberty and Prevalence in Prayer," in our homily on 1 John v. 14, 15 ('Pulpit Commentary').

terrible. Amidst the darkness, and with fears on every side: 1. *God's indignation is deprecated.* Affliction is hard to bear; but with God's wrath it would be overwhelming. 2. *God's pity is appealed to.* Weakness is pleaded, and the hope expressed that in deserved wrath God will remember mercy. His smile will turn the darkness to light. 3. *God's deliverance is entreated.* It is craved on the ground of God's mercies (ver. 4). It is urged on account of the brevity of life, and because death will put an end to the power of serving God in this world (ver. 5). It is claimed as the only relief for the helpless and miserable (ver. 7).

II. THE RESPONSE OF A GRACIOUS GOD. It is said the darkest hour is that before the dawn. So here the psalmist, in his utter weakness and woe, turning from sin unto God, finds help. A light surprises him like sunrise breaking in suddenly on a dark night (vera. 8, 9). The answer from God is not only quick and timely, but effectual. Thrice the glad heart says, "God has heard," thus confirming to itself the news which seems almost too good to be true.—W. F.

Vers. 1—10.—*Night and morning in the soul.* I. NIGHT. There is darkness. God hides himself. There is dreariness. The soul is left alone with sad and distressing thoughts. There is depression. The ghosts of past misdeeds rise up. There are nameless terrors. But though perplexed, there need not be despair. God is near. He can help. He can even give songs in the night.

II. MORNING. Light comes, bringing hope and peace. God has heard the cry of his child. Such deliverances are comforting. They not only show God's mercy and truth, but they prophesy of complete redemption. If there be night, let us wait for the morning. The weary traveller, the tempest-tossed mariner, the city watchman dreading the assault of the foe, comfort themselves with the thought that the morning cometh. So let us look up, for our redemption draweth nigh (Luke xxi. 28).—W. F.

Vers. 1—10.—*Great afflictions; greater consolation.* The language in this psalm may seem exaggerated and unreal. But it is not so. Want of imagination and sympathy in some, and want of experience in others, make them unfit judges. We neither know our strength nor our weakness till we are tried. The man who may have stood up to help others in their troubles may be cast down and disconsolate when visited with trouble himself (Job iv. 3—5). Learn—

I. THAT THERE ARE WORSE AFFLICTIONS THAN WE KNOW OF. We must not make our life the limit, nor our experience the standard. Besides what we see, there is what we only hear of, and besides all these, there are miseries beyond our wildest imaginings. Even as to ourselves, let our case be ever so bad, we can conceive of its becoming *worse*. What a glimpse have we of the dread possibilities of the future in that solemn word of our Lord to the man who had for thirty and eight years been a helpless cripple, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John v. 14)!

II. THAT THERE ARE ADEQUATE CONSOLATIONS FOR THE SEVEREST TRIALS. Come what will, God is our Refuge and our Strength. Let us therefore be patient and trust. Let us also be thankful. Things might be far worse than they are. Let us also bear ourselves gently and kindly to others who suffer. It is those who have themselves been sorely tried who can best sympathize, as it is those who have themselves been comforted who can best comfort others (2 Cor. i. 3—5).—W. F.

Vers. 1—10.—*Deliverance from sore trouble.* "In the malice of his enemies David sees the rod of God's chastisement, and therefore makes his prayer to God for deliverance. The struggle has lasted so long, the grief is so bitter, that his health has given way, and he has been brought to the gates of the grave. But ere long light and peace visit him, and he breaks forth into the joy of thanksgiving."

I. A PICTURE OF COMPLICATED DISTRESS. 1. *Danger from outward foes.* Producing constant fear and anxiety, and perhaps threatening his life. 2. *A sense of being under the chastising hand of God.* The malice of his enemies was regarded as the rod by which God in his anger was punishing him—an Old Testament view. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten"—the New Testament view. 3. *These two things caused the prostration of both body and soul.* Mental troubles are the causes of our severest

afflictions and sufferings. Threatened by man, frowned upon by God, laid low by disease,—that is the picture here given.

II. ARGUMENTS USED IN SUPPORT OF THE CRY FOR DELIVERANCE. "Let thine anger cease;" "Forgive my sins." 1. *Because of the extremity of my sufferings.* He "languished" (ver. 2). His "bones were terrified" (ver. 2). His "soul sore vexed" (ver. 3). His bed swam with his tears (ver. 6). His eye wasted and grew dim with his grief (ver. 7). It is an appeal to the Divine pity. "He will not keep his anger for ever." 2. *His power of endurance was exhausted.* "O Jehovah, how long?" I cannot endure the severity of thy judgments. "How long?" was all Calvin said in his most intense grief. Here it means, "Do not quite destroy me, for I am well-nigh spent." Still a cry for mercy. 3. *Because his death would put an end to his power to praise God.* "There is here the childlike confidence which fears not to advance the plea that God's glory is concerned in granting his request." And that is the ground of all true prayer—the granting will honour thee. Those in Sheol lived a spectral, shadowy life, apart from the light of God's presence, and could not praise him. "The living, the living, he shall praise thee." The meaning here is—it is pleasing to God to be praised, and pleasing to himself to praise.

III. THE TRIUMPH OF RELIEVING, PENITENTIAL PRAYER. Salvation from his enemies had become a patent fact. God had forgiven, and he was safe, and could now rejoice. The psalm epitomizes his experience, and that accounts for the sudden change in the eighth verse. Our sins are our greatest foes, and when God, through Christ, forgives them, that is the hour of our greatest triumph.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM VII.

THE composition of this psalm by David, asserted in the title, is generally allowed. Internal evidence seems to indicate for its date the earlier portion of David's public life—that during which he suffered persecution at the hands of Saul. There are two considerable difficulties connected with the title: (1) the meaning of "Shiggaiion of David;" and (2) the determination of the identity of "Cush the Benjamite." "Shiggaiion" is connected by some with the "Shigioneth" of Hab. iii. 1, which is commonly explained to be a particular kind of tune or tunes. But the identity of the two words is uncertain, and the identity of their meaning, at an interval of nearly six centuries, is still more open to question. The meaning of "Shiggaiion" has really to be guessed from the context; and the most probable of the conjectures made would seem to be, either simply, "a poem of David," or "a lyrical composition of David"—a meaning which obtains a certain amount of support from the Arabic. With respect to "Cush the Benjamite," it has been argued (1) that he was a person, otherwise unknown, who held a high position among the courtiers of Saul ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 183); (2) that he was Saul him-

self (Hengstenberg); (3) that he was Shimei (2 Sam. xvi. 5—13), represented under a feigned name (Kay). This last conjecture brings the psalm down to too late a date; the two others are equally possible, and almost equally plausible. If a preference is to be given to either of them over the other, we should incline to the view of Hengstenberg, that Saul is meant, and that he is called "Cush," with allusion to his father's name being Kish. Such plays upon words have always found much favour in the East.

The psalm has but one marked division, that between vers. 1—5 and vers. 6—17, where the term *selah* occurs. The remainder runs on continuously, without any marked break.

Ver. 1.—O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust (compare the openings of Psa. xi., xxxi., and lxxi.). When David is most sorely pressed by persecution and danger, then is his faith and trust in God most plainly apparent. Save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me. The Revised Version has, "from all them that pursue me;" but "persecute" is better. Hengstenberg and Kay have, "from all my persecutors." So also French and Skinner. The persecutors are such men as the Ziphites and others, who encouraged Saul in his attempts to take David's life (1 Sam. xxvi. 1, 19).



Ver. 2.—Lest he tear my soul like a lion (comp. Ps. v. 6, where there is a similar abrupt transition from the plural to the singular number). On both occasions David fears one special enemy—then probably Ahithophel, now Saul. The simile of the lion is one frequent in the Psalms (see Pss. x. 9; xvii. 12; xxii. 13, 21; xxxv. 17; liv. 4, etc.). Rending it in pieces. As the lion does a sheep. While there is none to deliver. No human helper, at once willing and able to give deliverance.

Ver. 3.—O Lord my God, if I have done this; *i.e.* “*this which is laid to my charge.*” The general charge against David in Saul’s lifetime was that he “sought the king’s hurt” (1 Sam. xxiv. 9). Afterwards he was accused of being “a bloody man” (2 Sam. xvi. 8)—the death of Ishbosheth, and perhaps of others, being regarded as his work. If there be iniquity in my hands. If, *i.e.*, I have committed any criminal act, if any definite offence can be charged against me. Human weakness and imperfection David does not mean to deny, but, like Job, he maintains in a certain qualified sense his righteousness.

Ver. 4.—If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me. This is probably the true meaning. David denies that he has wantonly attacked and injured any one with whom he was on friendly and peaceable terms. No doubt he was accused of having estranged Saul by plotting to take the crown from him. (Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.) This translation, which is retained by our Revisers, has the support also of Ewald, Hupfeld, Mr. Aglen, and the ‘Speaker’s Commentary.’ If accepted, it must be considered as a reference to 1 Sam. xxiv. 7, or else to 1 Sam. xxvi. 9, or both, and as a sort of parenthetical protest, “Nay, not only have I not injured a friend, but I have gone so far as to let my enemy escape me.” A different meaning is, however, given to the passage by many critics, as Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, Bishop Horsley, Cheyne, etc., who regard the sense as running on without any parenthesis, and translate, “If I have oppressed him who without cause is mine enemy.” David, according to this view, denies that he has either injured a friend or requited evil to a foe.

Ver. 5.—Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it. “If I have been guilty of any of these acts, then let my enemy not only persecute my soul, as he is doing (vers. 1, 2), but take it—make it his prey—obtain full power over it.” Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth; *i.e.* “utterly destroy me and bring me to ruin.” And not only so, but also lay mine honour in the dust; *i.e.* “bring me down to the grave with shame.”

Compare the imprecations of Job upon himself (Job xxxi. 8, 10, 22, 40).

Ver. 6.—Arise, O Lord, in thine anger. To call on God to “arise” is to ask him to take action, to lay aside the neutral attitude in which he most commonly shows himself to man, and to interfere openly in the concerns of earth. To call on him to “arise in his anger” is to entreat him to vindicate our cause against those opposed to us, and to visit them with some open manifestation of his displeasure (comp. Pss. iii. 7; ix. 19; x. 12; xvii. 13; xlv. 26; lxviii. 1). Lift up thyself. This is even a stronger expression than “arise” (Isa. xxxiii. 10). It is a call on God to appear in his full strength. Because of the rage of mine enemies; or, *against the rage of mine enemies* (Kay, Revised Version). Force must be met by force. David justifies his appeal for aid by alleging the violence and fury of those whose attacks he has to meet. And awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. The two clauses are not connected in the original, which runs, “Awake for me: thou hast commanded judgment.” The meaning seems to be, “Arouse thyself on my behalf—judgment is a thing which thou hast ordained—surely now is the time for it.”

Ver. 7.—So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about. Then, if thou wilt show thyself in judgment, the congregation of the peoples—not, apparently, Israel only—will crowd around thee, in acknowledgment of thy majesty, and recognize in thee the righteous Judge of all the earth. For their sakes therefore return thou on high; rather, *and above it* (or, *above them*; *i.e.* above the congregation of the peoples) *return thou on high*. After coming down to earth, and executing judgment, then go back to thy throne in heaven.

Ver. 8.—The Lord shall judge the people. Hitherto judgment has been prayed for, now it is announced, “The Lord shall judge”—shall decide between David and his enemies—shall judge them in his anger, and at the same time judge David, *i.e.* vindicate his cause. David has no desire to escape this judgment. Judge me, he says, O Lord, according to my righteousness. Judge me, *i.e.*, and, if thou findest me righteous, acquit me and vindicate me. And according to mine integrity that is in me; literally, *which is on me* (comp. Job xxix. 24, “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem”).

Ver. 9.—Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end. It is not the removal of the wicked, but the removal of their wickedness, that David desires (comp. Ps. x. 15). But establish the just; *i.e.* pro-

fect, strengthen, and sustain him. For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins (comp. Jer. xi. 20; xvii. 10; xx. 12). "The heart, as the seat of the understanding and the will, the reins of natural impulses and affections" ('Speaker's Commentary').

Ver. 10.—My defence is of God; literally, *my shield is on God*; i.e. "rests on him" (Kay)—is upheld by him. Which saveth the upright in heart (comp. Ps. cxxv. 4).

Ver. 11.—God judgeth the righteous; rather, *God is a righteous Judge*. So Rosenmüller, Bishop Horsley, Dr. Kay, the 'Speaker's Commentary,' and the Revised Version. And God is angry with the wicked every day. There is no need of inserting the words, "with the wicked," since, of course, it is with the wicked that God is angry. What the psalmist means to assert especially is that God's anger continues against the wicked as long as their wickedness continues.

Ver. 12.—If he turn not, he (i.e. God) will whet his sword (comp. Deut. xxxii. 41; Isa. xxvii. 1; xxxiv. 5). "Every new transgression," says Bishop Horne, "sets a fresh edge to God's sword." He hath bent his bow, and made it ready; rather, *he hath bent his bow, and fixed it*; i.e. held it in the position for taking aim.

Ver. 13.—He hath prepared for him the instruments of death. These are probably not the sword and the bow, but the "arrows" of the next clause. They are prepared "for him," i.e. for the wicked man. He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors; rather, *he maketh his arrows to be fiery ones*. Hengstenberg notes that "in sieges it was customary to wrap inflammable matter round arrows, and to shoot them after it had been kindled" (compare the "fiery darts" of St. Paul, Eph. vi. 16).

Ver. 14.—Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood (comp. Job xv. 35; Isa. lix. 4). The "falsehood" intended is probably the bringing of false charges against David (see vers. 3—5).

Ver. 15.—He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made (comp. Pss. ix. 15, 16; xxxv. 9; lvii. 6; Prov. xxvi. 27; xxviii. 10, etc.). There are several illustrations of this law of God's providence in Scripture, the most striking being that of Haman. Its existence as a law was noticed by some of the classical writers, as Ovid, who says—

"Nec lex justior ulla est,  
Quam neois artifices arte perire sua."

Ver. 16.—His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing upon his own pate. Some critics see in this a continuation of the metaphor, and suppose that, while the sinner is in the pit, the heap which his own hands have thrown out falls in upon him and crushes him. But it is perhaps better to understand the words in a more general way.

Ver. 17.—I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness. Another abrupt transition—a song of thankfulness to Jehovah for giving the deliverance which the psalmist foresees, and considers as good as accomplished. And will sing praise to the Name of the Lord most high (comp. Ps. viii. 1, 9, "How excellent is *thy Name* in all the earth!"). God is identified with his Name very commonly in Scripture, or, perhaps we should say, the Name of God is used as a periphrasis for God himself. Where God puts his special presence, he is said to "put his Name" (Deut. xii. 5, 21: 1 Kings xiv. 21; 2 Chron. xii. 13). His Name is "holy and reverend" (Ps. cxi. 19); "incense is offered unto it" (Mal. i. 11); it is "magnified for ever" (1 Chron. xvii. 24); for it the temple is built (1 Kings viii. 44); through it the godly "tread down their enemies" (Ps. xlv. 5); the "desire of men's souls is to it" (Isa. xxvi. 8). (See also Pss. xcii. 1; xvi. 8; xcix. 3; ciii. 1; cv. 1; cxiii. 1; cxv. 1; cxix. 55; cxlv. 1, 2, 21; cxlviii. 13; cxlix. 3.)

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 11.—*God's righteous displeasure against sin is an abiding reality*. "God is a righteous Judge," etc. (Revised Version). Confidence in Divine justice is one of the deepest roots of religion. On this faith Abraham based his daring but humble intercession for the cities (Gen. xviii. 25). To this justice the psalmist, deeply wronged and falsely accused, makes impassioned appeal. This (and many other passages of) Scripture is grievously misjudged if read as the outpouring of personal revenge. David is perfectly willing to suffer, if he deserves it (vers. 4, 5). The enemies against whom (here and elsewhere) he appeals are not merely his private foes, but God's enemies public rebels against law and truth, "workers of iniquity." "God is angry . . . every day." *Q.d.: God's righteous displeasure against sin is an abiding reality.*

I. CONSCIENCE PROVES THIS. Conscience is the echo within the soul of God's voice, "accusing or else excusing" (Rom. ii. 15), praising or blaming, saying always, "Thou

shalt do right; thou shalt not do wrong." This voice may be dulled and silenced by the practice of sin ("conscience seared," 1 Tim. iv. 2), or perverted by false philosophy or false religious belief. But it is God's witness, for all that. Note that praise and blame imply one another. If God had no holy wrath against wrong, he could have no delight in and approval of goodness.

II. GOD'S CHARACTER PROVES THIS. The more benevolent any one is, the more odious cruelty is to him; the more truthful, the more he hates and despises lying lips; the more generous, the more he scorns meanness; the more just, the more indignant he is at injustice. So, summing up every morally good quality under "holiness," every immoral quality under "sin," the more we think of God as perfectly holy, the more we must infer his hatred of sin. It is "that abominable thing" (Jer. xlv. 4).

III. GOD'S LOVE PROVES IT. (See on Ps. v. 4, 5.) Suppose a mother sees her child ill used, tortured, murdered; a son hears his parents foully slandered; a loyal soldier sees insult offered to his sovereign; a true patriot finds his country unjustly assailed;—just proportionate to the warmth of love is the flame of righteous indignation. We do but maim and caricature Divine love if we deny God's righteous anger against sin.

IV. GOD'S DEALINGS PROVE IT. In point of fact, every day brings new examples—new *proof* is needless—that "it is a righteous thing with God" (2 Thess. i. 6) to punish sin. In some cases the connection is obvious (*e.g.* disease from intemperance, gluttony, licentiousness), the road to ruin short and open; in others, it is slow and hidden (as the destruction of trust and respect by lying, of all that is noble and joyful in life by covetousness). We are all so bound up that the pure and innocent suffer through the vicious and unprincipled. But the main lessons of providence are plain. "Righteousness exalteth a nation;" "The wages of sin is death."

V. THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION FROM SIN PROVES IT. The transcendent sufferings of the Son of God admit no rational explanation but that given in Scripture: "He bare our sins;" gave "his life a ransom" (1 Pet. ii. 24; Matt. xx. 28; comp. Rom. iii. 25; 2 Cor. v. 21). Apart from this reason, the death of Jesus would be the darkest enigma in God's providence; the most inexplicable, discouraging, and melancholy event in human history. Never forget that in *not sparing his Son* (Rom. viii. 32) the Father was, in truth, taking the burden of our sin on himself.

CONCLUSION. To treat sin lightly is to set our judgment up against God's; to show ourselves out of sympathy with him and unlike him, and therefore incapable of communion with him here or of happiness in his presence hereafter.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—17.—*The slandered saint appealing to his God.*<sup>1</sup> There is nothing like the trials of life to constrain to prayer; and no prayers are so full of deep meaning as those forced out by such trials. There is no reason for doubting the Davidic authorship of this psalm. It well accords with some known episodes in his experience, and is just such an appeal to the great Judge of all the earth as he might be expected to make when unjustly accused; specially when accused of evil in the very direction in which he had most strikingly restrained himself therefrom. But what a mercy that the true believer has such a God to whom he can flee, and that he can feel assured that, however unjust man may be, there is ever one tribunal high above all the people, at which absolute justice will be done! No believer can possibly find out all that God is to him till he has thus to flee to his throne for refuge from the storm. Let wronged and slandered Christians study the method and words of an Old Testament psalmist under circumstances to which their own are somewhat analogous.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THIS PSALM WAS WRITTEN ARE CLEARLY INDICATED.<sup>2</sup> Four features mark them. 1. *A fierce enemy is raging against the writer.* One fierce as the wild beasts against which, as a shepherd, he had had to defend his flock (ver. 2). 2. *Charges of evil-doing are made against him.* The tone of the third

<sup>1</sup> For general readers, the notes of the R.T.S. edition of the 'Book of Psalms' will be helpful with regard to the titles of the psalms.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Cheyne says, "A national psalm it is, beyond doubt;" we would rather say, "Its forms of expression show it to be a personal psalm, beyond doubt."

verse indicates this, although we have no means of knowing who the "Cush" might be that brought forward these charges. It is no uncommon thing for good men to find themselves the victims of false accusations. Such accusations, however false, will do injury, since (1) some one or other will be sure to believe them, even in the absence of proof; and (2) no man can prove a negative, *i.e.* *he cannot show what he has not done*. This rule, that no one is expected to prove a negative, holds good in logic, and it ought to be regarded in other departments also; but, unfortunately, people are not as careful as they should be about screening another's reputation. Unspeakable distress may thereby be occasioned to innocent men. 3. *The psalmist knows these charges are false*; and therefore, though appeal to man is vain, he can and does appeal to God (vers. 3, 4). 4. *Notwithstanding this, his enemy's rage is actually threatening his life*. (See ver. 2.) It is bad to plot against life; it is equally bad to poison a man's reputation; yea, worse. Let those who are slandered read such psalms as this over and over again, that they may see how the saints of old were tried in like manner, and what was the course they pursued.

II. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, THE BELIEVER MAKES GOD HIS REFUGE. (See ver. 1, Revised Version margin, "In thee do I take refuge.") While the storm is raging without, the believer is hiding in his God. "Thou wilt hide me in thy presence from the pride of man; thou wilt keep me secretly in thy pavilion from the strife of tongues." The attributes of God, which are a terror to the wicked, are the shelter of the righteous. 1. *God's righteousness*. (Ver. 11.) 2. *His searching the reins and hearts*. (Ver. 9.) 3. *His commanding judgment*, either in the way of precept, by laws which may not be slighted, or in the way of administration, by chastisements which cannot be evaded. Even so these features of the Divine character and administration are the joy of injured innocence (ver. 10, "My shield is with God," Revised Version). And in a case like this, the saint can say, in faith, hope, and love, "O Lord my God." To know this—that God is ours—and that sooner or later he will set us right, is of incalculable value in such sore distresses.

III. IT IS WELL IF IN SUCH CASES THE PLEADING ONE CAN ASSERT BEFORE GOD HIS OWN INTEGRITY. The third, fourth, and fifth verses ought not to be regarded either as assertion of perfect righteousness, nor yet as the utterances of conceit; nor should we be warranted in regarding even the eighth verse as an indication of self-righteousness. Not by any means. Let us take the psalm for what it manifestly is, and all is clear. It is the appeal of a slandered man to God; it is the appeal of one who knows that, *so far as the charges of his enemy are concerned*, he is innocent (cf. 1 Sam. xxiv., xxvi.), and that therefore he may with confidence refer his case to the tribunal which is infinitely above those of earth (Ps. xviii. 18—24). Note: There is a very wide difference between the self-righteousness which regards itself as blameless before God, and the conscious integrity which can look any man in the face without flinching. Of the former the psalmist had none (cf. Pss. xxv. 7, 11; cxliii. 2). It would be wicked to pretend innocence before God; but, in a case like the psalmist's, it would be unmanly not to assert it before men. Cromwell said, "I know that God is above all ill reports, and that he will in his own time vindicate me."

IV. UNDER SUCH PRESSURE FROM WITHOUT THE PRAYER IS DIRECT, POINTED, AND CLEAR. The psalmist does not deem it needful to cover the whole ground of possible prayer on each occasion. He lays the burden of the moment before God, and leaves it there. His petitions are fivefold. 1. *Arise, O Lord!* (Ver. 6.) 2. *Save me!* (Ver. 1.) 3. *Vindicate me!* (Ver. 8.) 4. *Bring wickedness to an end!* (Ver. 9.) 5. *Establish the just!* (Ver. 9.) Note: When the heart is overweighed with sorrow and anxiety, let us always tell our God exactly the state of the case. We need not go over all points of religion or theology in every prayer; let us just tell God the matter of immediate pressure (cf. Pss. cxlii. 2; xxxiv. 4, 6; Phil. iv. 6, 7). Such petitions as are forced out by sorrow may be sent up in all loving confidence to our Father in heaven. He will excuse all their mistakes, and answer them in the fullness of love.

V. THERE IS INDICATED A FULL ASSURANCE OF GOD'S APPEARING FOR JUDGMENT. We do not now refer to "the last judgment," but to those judgments which are often manifest in the providence of God (cf. Isa. xxvi. 9, latter part). And he who studies history, and observes the times with a view to watching the movements of God in the

\* It is strange that Dr. Cheyne should so entirely have missed the meaning here.

world, will find abundant illustration of the two features of a perpetual judgment which has long been, still is; and yet will be, going forward in the world; and that in two directions. 1. *As regards the wicked.* (1) God is angry every day; his holy indignation ever goes forth against sin. There is no feature of human life more striking than the sorrow and misery which follow on sin. (2) God sends forth his arrows, yea, fiery arrows (ver. 13). (3) The evil which bad men devise against others often comes back on their own head (vers. 15, 16). Many a Haman hangs on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.<sup>1</sup> 2. *As regards the righteous.* "Who saveth them that are upright of heart" (ver. 10). Even so. The whole of the thirty-seventh psalm is an exposition of this fact, and the seventy-third psalm is an illustration of it. Observation and experience will perpetually furnish new proofs of the same. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."—C.

Ver. 3.—*Purity of heart.* "If I have done this."

I. TRUE INNOCENCE IS MARKED BY HUMILITY. David is bold before men, but humble before God. Why? There is the sense that innocence is limited and imperfect. We may be free from particular sins, and yet be guilty in others. Besides, innocence is but comparative. Measured by the standard of men, we may be without offence, but tried by the holy, spiritual Law of God, we are convicted of innumerable sins, and behind all is a sinful heart.

II. ASSOCIATED WITH MERCY. "Yea, I have delivered him" (ver. 4). So David dealt gently with Saul. His magnanimous sparing of him when he was in his power was no mere impulse, but the free outcome of his loving and generous heart. The merciful, whom our Lord has blessed, are placed between those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" and "the pure in heart," who see God.

III. APPEALS WITH CONFIDENCE TO THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. The sense of right prophecies of the triumph of right. Having faith in the justice of God, we can leave all in his hands; and, loving him and assured of his love toward us, we can patiently await the end, knowing that all things shall work together for our good.—W. F.

Ver. 1.—*God the true Refuge of the soul.* This psalm, like many others, refers to a time of trial. The key-note may, perhaps, be found in ver. 1, "In thee." When trouble comes we naturally look out from ourselves for help. Some lean upon friends; others cry for a favourable change of circumstances; while others again preach patience to themselves, in the hope that somehow deliverance will come. But only by trusting in God can we find real help; he is the Adullam, the true Refuge of the soul. "In thee." Here is—

I. RESCUE FROM SIN. When the paralytic was let down in the midst of the people before our Lord, his first word to him was, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He needed healing, but he more sorely needed deliverance from sin. And so it is with us. Troubles may press heavily on the soul, but the first and chief thing is to be made right with God. Let this be done, and then we can bear the ills of life with patience, and face the future without fear (Ps. cxliii. 9).

II. REFUGE FROM SOCIAL OPPRESSIONS. Foes may be many and fierce; their tongues may be as sharp swords, and their malice unrelenting. Much that they speak against us may be false and calumnious; much more may be cruel perversions of the truth; but so long as we are able to rest in God, we are safe. He is just; he is the true Vindicator; he will not only defend us, but deliver us. Like Job, we can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job xix. 25).

III. REST AMIDST THE CONFUSIONS AND MISERIES OF THE WORLD. Evil abounds. We often feel constrained to cry, with the gentle Cowper—

"My ear is pain'd,  
My soul is sick with every day's report  
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd."

What then? How little can we do in the way of remedy! We can feel grief; we can express sympathy; we can try, as we have opportunity, to lessen human woe;

<sup>1</sup> See a striking illustration in Spurgeon's 'Treasury of David,' *in loc.*

we can bear our part in the great business of confession, humbling ourselves before the Lord for the sins of others as well as our own. There may be no result. Things may even seem to grow worse; but in the darkest hour we can cry, "Our Father, . . . deliver us from evil;" and take comfort from the thought that not only is God "our Father," but that his are "the kingdom and the power and the glory." "In thee:" here is hope for the sinner, and comfort for the saint. "In thee:" here is defence for the weak, and inspiration for the worker, and a bright future for all who long and labour for the advancement of truth and righteousness (Isa. xxvi. 20, 21; Rev. xix. 6).—W. F.

**Vers. 1—17.—Trust in God.** An earnest appeal to God to save him from the wickedness of men who would requite him with evil for the good he had done in sparing Saul's life. The charge against him probably was that he still sought the life of Saul; and they plotted against his life. In the midst of this wrong and danger, what was his resource?

**I. TRUST IN GOD.** Not in counter-plotting against his enemies, nor neglecting the use of means for his own safety; but faith in the all-controlling providence of God.

**II. A LOFTY CONSCIOUSNESS OF INNOUENCE.** (Vers. 3—5.) Nothing can give such confidence in a righteous God as the consciousness of righteousness in ourselves. We cannot pray for Divine help if we regard iniquity in our heart.

**III. IN HIS BLAMELESSNESS HE APPEALS TO GOD FOR JUDGMENT BETWEEN HIM AND HIS ENEMIES.** (Vers. 6—9.) He calls upon God to "arise," "to lift himself up," "to awake," to exert his mightiest power in doing justice to both sides.

**IV. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS GIVES HIM HOPE THAT THE OVERTHROW OF HIS ENEMIES IS NEAR.** (Vers. 10—13.) God's justice is a manifest present fact, not deferred. "He judgeth the righteous, and is angry with the wicked every day." The overthrow may come at any moment.

**V. THE OVERTHROW HAS ALREADY BEGUN, AND THIS GIVES HIM CONFIDENCE AND GRATITUDE.** "Is fallen into the ditch which he made." Deliverance is come, therefore "I will sing praise to the Name of the Lord most high." But he did not see this so clearly before. Experience opens our eyes.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM VIII.

**Ps. VIII.** is altogether a psalm of praise and thanksgiving. Its primary idea is the condescending love and goodness of God towards man. That God, who had made the heavens, and set his glory on them, should have a regard for man, and "visit him," and not only so, but give him so lofty a position, so exalted a destiny, is a thought that is well-nigh overwhelming. The psalmist, filled with the thought, can do no less than pour out his feelings of love and gratitude in song. The Davidical authorship is generally allowed. What "upon Gittith" means is very uncertain, but the most probable conjecture is that a melody, or musical style, which David had learnt at Gath, is intended.

**Ver. 1.—O Lord our Lord.** In the original, *Jehovah Adoneyni*; i.e. "Jehovah, who art our sovereign Lord and Master." As David is here the mouthpiece of humanity, praising God for mercies common to all men, he uses

the plural pronoun instead of the singular one. How excellent is thy Name in all the earth! or, "How glorious is thy Name!" (Kay, Cheyne). Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. It is difficult to obtain this sense from the present Hebrew text; but some corruption of the text is suspected.

**Ver. 2.—Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.** By "babes and sucklings" are meant young children just able to lisped God's praises, and often doing so, either through pious teaching or by a sort of natural instinct, since "Heaven lies about us in our infancy" (Wordsworth). These scarce articulate mutterings form a foundation on which the glory of God in part rests. Because of thine enemies. To put them to shame, who, having attained to manhood, refuse to acknowledge God. That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. It scarcely seems as if any single individual—either Absalom, or Abithophel, or even Satan (Kay)—is intended. Rather the words are used generally of all those who are enemies of God, and desirous of revenging themselves upon him. The existence of such persons is well shown by Hengstenberg.

Ver. 3.—When I consider thy heavens (comp. *Ps.* xix. 1; xxxiii. 6; civ. 2). David, in his shepherd-life, had had abundant opportunity of “considering the heavens,” and had evidently scanned them with the eye of a poet and an intense admirer of nature. It is probably in remembrance of the nights when he watched his father’s flock, that he makes no mention of the sun, but only of “the moon and the stars.” The work of thy fingers; and therefore “thy heavens.” Often as the “hand of God” is mentioned in Scripture, it is but very rarely that we hear of his “finger” or “fingers.” So far as I am aware, the only places are *Exod.* viii. 19; xxxi. 18; *Deut.* ix. 10; and *Luke* xi. 20. The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained (comp. *Gen.* i. 16).

Ver. 4.—What is man, that thou art mindful of him? In comparison with the lofty heavens, the radiant moon, and the hosts of sparkling stars, man seems to the psalmist wholly unworthy of God’s attention. He is not, like Job, impatient of God’s constant observation (*Job* vii. 17—20), but simply filled with wonder at his marvellous condescension (comp. *Ps.* cxliv. 3). And the son of man, that thou visitest him? The “son of man” here is a mere variant for “man” in the preceding hemistich. The clause merely emphasizes the general idea.

Ver. 5.—For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels; rather, *thou hast made him but a little lower than God* (אֱלֹהִים). There is no place in the Old Testament where *Elohim* means “angels;” and, though the LXX. so translate in the present passage, and the rendering has passed from them into the New Testament (*Heb.* ii. 7), it cannot be regarded as critically correct. The psalmist, in considering how man has been favoured by God, goes back in thought to his creation, and remembers the words of *Gen.* i. 26, 27, “Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him” (compare the still stronger expression in *Ps.* lxxxii. 6, “I have said, Ye are gods”). And hast crowned him with glory and honour; i.e. “and, by so doing, by giving him a nature but a little short of the Divine, hast put on him a crown of glory such as thou hast given to no other creature.” There is a point of view from which the nature of man transcends that of angels, since (1) it is a direct transcript of the Divine (*Gen.* i. 27); and (2) it is the nature which the Son of God assumed (*Heb.* ii. 16).

Ver. 6.—Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands. An evi-

dent reference to *Gen.* i. 28, “Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” By these words man’s right of dominion was established. His actual dominion only came, and still comes, by degrees. Thou hast put all things under his feet (comp. *1 Cor.* xv. 25—28; *Heb.* ii. 8). In their fulness, the words are only true of the God-Man, Jesus Christ (*Matt.* xxviii. 18).

Ver. 7.—All sheep and oxen; literally, *flocks and oxen, all of them*. The domesticated animals are placed first, as most completely under man’s actual dominion. Yea, and the beasts of the field; i.e. “and all other land animals” (comp. *Gen.* i. 28; ix. 2). If some were still unsubdued (*2 Kings* xvii. 25, 26; *Job* xl. 24; xli. 1—10), their subjugation was only a question of time (see *Isa.* xi. 6—9; *Lxx.* 25).

Ver. 8.—The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas; literally, *fowl of the air, and fishes of the sea, the passer through the paths of the seas*. Every passer through the paths of the seas, whether exactly a fish or no. The *cetacea* are thus included (comp. *Gen.* i. 21).

Ver. 9.—O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the earth! The psalmist ends as he began, with excellent poetic effect, and in a spirit of intense piety. Some think that he saw in vision the complete subjugation of the whole earth to man in such sort as will only be accomplished in the “new heavens and new earth,” in which Christ shall reign visibly over his people. But his words are not beyond those which are natural to one of warm poetic temperament and deep natural piety, looking out upon the world and upon man as they existed in his day. Inspiration, of which we know so little, may perhaps have guided him to the choice of words and phrases peculiarly applicable to “the Ideal of man’s nature and true Representative, Christ;” and hence the many references to this psalm in the New Testament (*Matt.* xxi. 16; *1 Cor.* xv. 25—28; *Heb.* ii. 6—8), and in this sense the psalm may be Messianic; but it is certainly not one of these, like *Ps.* ii. and *Ps.* xxii., where the author consciously spoke of another time than his own, and of a Personage whom he knew only by faith. (For other examples of the recurrence at the end of a psalm of the idea wherewith it commenced, see *Ps.* xx. 1—9; xli. 1—11; lxx. 1—5; ciii. 1—22; cxviii. 1—29; and the “Hallelujah psalms:” *Ps.* cvi. 1—48; cxiii. 1—9; cxvii. 1, 2; cxv. 1—21; c. lvi.—cl.)

## HOMILETICS.

**Ver. 4.—Man's littleness and his greatness.** "What is man," etc.? The littleness and greatness of man are set before us here in powerful contrast. In view of this vast magnificent universe, he seems a speck, an atom, a vapour that appears and vanishes (Jas. iv. 14). But the love, care, grace of his Maker lift him to a height where he sees the world at his feet; he is endowed with a life, heir to a glory, that shall endure when the earth and the heavens pass away.

**I. There is THE EARTHLY SIDE OF HUMAN LIFE.** Its littleness, frailty, brevity. "What is man?" 1. Compare the actual littleness and bodily weakness of man with the immensity of the material universe, the awful might of its never-wearying forces, the stability of its structure, the unswerving, undenyng constancy of its laws. Illustrate from the discoveries of astronomy, geology, etc. Compare a long human life with that of an oak of a thousand years. But a thousand years are but a day—a few minutes—compared with the mighty past, the eternal future (1 Chron. xxix. 15; Ps. xc. 3—6). 2. Consider the narrow limits of human life. Deduct from the effective force of even a well-spent life the time absorbed by infancy, sleep, sickness, trifles, outward hindrances, weakness, and decay. How great a proportion of the race is immersed in barbarism! How limited is man's knowledge, even with the vast accessions of this century, compared with his illimitable ignorance! How powerless is he in the grasp of circumstances! If the Earth but stirs in her sleep, his cities fall. If the wind blows in its strength, his navies are wrecked. If the invisible seeds of pestilence crowd the air, he must breathe or die—his science is baffled. If the clouds withhold rain or pour out too much, famine enters his home. If the earth refuses him gold, or yields it too rapidly and easily, his commerce is deranged (Ps. xxxix. 5, 6). 3. Consider, too, the perishing, vanishing nature of man's greatest achievements, richest possessions, sweetest earthly joys and hopes. It is no wonder that, with those who meditate deeply on human life, and observe largely, *seeing only its earthly side*, philosophy should turn sour and curdle into "pessimism." "Is life worth living?"

**II. THE DIVINE SIDE.** "Thou art mindful of him; . . . thou visitest him." The greatness and glory of man's nature are seen: 1. In its *origin*. (Ver. 5.) Man is the child of God (Gen. i. 26, 27; Acts xvii. 28, 29). 2. In the *care of God's providence*. In those unmeasured ages, before man arrived, which so oppress our imagination, God was preparing the earth for man. For other creatures also, it is true, but not as for him. To each lower creature he gave its own haunt, its own food; but they sow no harvests, plant no forests, quarry no hills, pasture no flocks, navigate no seas; know nothing of nature as a *whole*—its beauty, mystery, wealth of enjoyment. For man was made the whole (vers. 6—8). It is God who has made the universe man's storehouse, and "ministreth seed," etc. (2 Cor. ix. 10). 3. In what we may call *spiritual providence*; the grace and love which order the life of *each one* of God's children, making sorrow and trouble a gracious discipline (Heb. xii. 6, 7; xiii. 5). 4. Above all, in *God's unspeakable Gift*. (1 John v. 11.) In the incarnate Son of God our humanity is exalted to the supreme height of glory (Phil. ii. 9—11; Heb. ii. 6—9). To the image of his glory the humblest believer is to be raised (Rom. viii. 29; 1 John iii. 2).

**LESSONS.** 1. Humility. 2. Faith. 3. Adoration.

**Ver. 6.—Man—nature—God.** "Thou hast put . . . feet." This brief but majestic psalm is remarkable for world-wide breadth; it shines with light transcending human genius. The name by which the Almighty Maker is addressed is his covenant name with Israel—the name which speaks not of *power*, but of *personal being*, "*Jehovah*." But here is no reference to Israel; nothing national, limited, ceremonial, local, temporary. This psalm is a sufficient reutation of the mean, narrow views of the Old Testament Scriptures, which lower the religion of Israel to the rank of one among the many national religions. Here we are concerned only with these three supreme ideas: man; nature; God. Jehovah is invoked as the Author of nature and God of all mankind. Consider this sublime declaration—first, as it stands here in the Old Testament Scriptures; secondly, as interpreted in the New Testament Scriptures.



I. Read these words, first, BY THEIR OWN LIGHT, AS THEY STAND PART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. 1. They are far from describing man's present actual position on this globe. He does not at present reign over nature, but wrestles with it; slowly grasps its secrets and masters its forces; has to keep watch and ward lest it destroy him. A few tribes of lower animals attach themselves serviceably to him, but most fly from him or defy him. Wolves ravage his flocks; worms corrode his ships. The sight of a locust or a beetle makes him tremble: he can crush it in an instant, but when countless millions of these minute rebels invade his fields and vineyards and orchards, they turn his wealth to poverty. Truly, "we see not yet all things put under him." 2. Yet these words are no poetic exaggeration. The context shows that the psalmist is looking back to the record of man's original dignity and heirship of the world (vers. 6—8 compared with Gen. i. 27, 29). This original grant conveys the idea not of easy, effortless lordship over a passive creation, but of progressive conquest by toil, skill, reason. Such is and has been man's dominion over the earth. This biblical account of the primitive dignity and moral standing of man is widely rejected in these days, on the assumption that it conflicts with science. Conflict between religious truth and scientific truth is impossible, because all truth is one. All truth is God's truth. The conflict is between testimony and hypothesis—the testimony of the most venerable and ancient of all histories, and the newest hypotheses of scientific men—hypotheses very confidently affirmed; but yet only hypotheses. It may turn out that the testimony is more scientific than the hypotheses. At all events, it is no trifle to reject it. Man knows not, apart from the Bible, whence he cometh or whither he goeth. Reject it as a revelation of fact, and the human race is an apparition upon earth—a stupendous exception to the laws which govern all other animals—of which the wildest conjectures of what passes for science can give no rational account. Reject its revelation of law, and man is seen wandering out of the unknown past towards an unknown future, without guidance or government. Reject its revelation of promise, and that unknown future is without hope or intelligible meaning. Accept the Bible as God's message, and we know whence we come and whither we go. Human life, sorrowful and confused as it is, shows like a stormy day which had a splendid dawn and shall yet have a serene evening and glorious rising again. We need not, then, be frightened by the most confident assertions, from the glorious belief that man began his history on earth as the child of the Father of spirits; not crawling out of sentient slime through a series of inconceivable transformations, compared with which all the miracles of the Bible are commonplace incidents; but able to converse with God, and to render intelligent, loving obedience to him: "a little lower than God himself;" "crowned with glory and honour."

II. AS INTERPRETED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. Faith prizes the past, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the present and the future. When we look at these words in the light of New Testament interpretation, new glory breaks from them. They are not simply history or poetry, but prophecy (Heb. ii. 8, 9). We need not ask, and cannot say, whether this meaning was known to the psalmist. The prophets uttered more than they knew. God interprets by fulfilling; and the fulfilment far outruns all our expectations. 1. In the Person, life, character, of our Lord Jesus, even "in the days of his flesh," our nature was raised to a pitch of glory and perfectness before inconceivable. God's image was restored (John xiv. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 47). 2. In the exaltation of Jesus, human nature is invested with Divine glory. The "days of his flesh" are past; but he wears our nature still (1 Tim. ii. 5; Phil. ii. 7—11; Matt. xxviii. 18). 3. All who believe in him are already, by faith, partakers in some degree of his glory (Eph. i. 19—23; ii. 6). And they shall hereafter, in perfect union with him and likeness to him, partake fully and eternally (1 John iii. 1—3; John xvii. 22—24).

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—"*Lord what is man?*" This is a song of praise equally adapted for men of every nation, country, colour, and clime. Its author was David,<sup>1</sup> who, as a

<sup>1</sup> We accept the titles assigned, unless reason to the contrary is shown.

shepherd-boy, had cast an observant eye on the works of God, both in the heavens above and the earth beneath; and the habit of doing this reverently and devoutly grew with his growth; so that, though we are entirely ignorant as to what period of his life it was in which he penned this psalm, it is manifestly an echo of the thoughts which, in his early shepherd-days, had filled his mind and inspired him to song. At that period in the world's history, only a Hebrew could have written such a psalm as this. Observant men in other nations might have written similar poetry, setting forth the glory of Nature's works; only a Hebrew saint could have so gloried in the great Worker whose majesty was "above the heavens," and of whom he could speak as "our Lord." Note: It is only as we know the Divine Worker that we can duly appreciate and fully enjoy the work. And as Science is, in her onward march, ever revealing more of the work, we have so much the more need to pray that the disclosures perpetually being made of the marvels of nature may be to us a book to reveal, and not a veil to conceal, the living and the true God. In dealing with this psalm we propose to let our exposition turn upon the expression, "Lord, what is man?" Let us note—

I. THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF MAN WHEN COMPARED WITH THE STUPENDOUS UNIVERSE. The heavens, the earth, the moon, the stars: how much more do these terms convey to us than they did to the psalmist! His inspiration, it is probable, did not extend to the realm of physical science; and his views of the wonders of the earth and of the heavens would be limited by the knowledge of his day. But since the telescope has shown us that our world is but as an atom, and the microscope that in every atom there is a world; since millions on millions of stars have come into the astronomer's field of vision; and since the conceptions of the time during which the orbs have been revolving and the earth has been preparing for man's use have so immeasurably grown,—the larger the universe seems, the more does man dwindle to a speck. And when we look at the slender frame of man, his weakness, and the momentary duration of his life, compared with the vast masses, the ceaseless energy, the incalculable duration to which the universe bears witness,—it is no wonder if at the greatness in which we are lost we stand appalled, and are ready to say, "In the midst of all this sublimity, what am I? A shred of entity, a phantom, a breath, a passing form on this earthly stage. Here is this great machine, with a mighty Unknown behind it, rolling and grinding, grinding and rolling, raising up one and setting down another. Ever and anon a wave of liquid fire will heave up mountains and overturn cities and hurl them into an abyss, and the cries of myriads will rend the air; and never will nature spare one relenting sigh or drop one sympathizing tear. All is fixed. Law is everywhere. What I am, or do, or say, or think, can matter nothing to the Great Unknown. Prayer is but empty breath. Amid the vastness I am lost, and can be of no more consequence than a mote in the sunbeam, and were I and all this generation to be swept away in the twinkling of an eye, we should no more be missed than a grain of dust when blown into the crater of a volcano! What is man?" So men argue. Even good men are overwhelmed with such thoughts, and say, "Our way is hid from the Lord, and our judgment is passed over from our God." While the unbeliever declares that a being so insignificant can never be the subject of Divine care, still less of Divine love; that man is no more to the Supreme than are the insects of a summer's day.<sup>1</sup> But this is only one side of a great question. Let us therefore note—

II. THE DIGNITY OF MAN AS DISCLOSED BY THE GRACIOUS VISITATION OF GOD. 1. *His actual dignity.* (1) In the structure and capacity of his nature. Man however great, force however persistent, can never equal *in quality* the power of thinking, loving, worshipping, suffering, sinning. One soul outweighs in value myriads of worlds. Our estimate of things must be qualitative as well as quantitative. And a being who can measure the distance of a star is infinitely greater than the star whose distance he measures. Man is made in the image of God (a) mentally,—he thinks as God thinks; (b) morally; (c) spiritually; (d) regally, to have dominion. Man is made to see God in all things. Babies and sucklings in this put to shame the rebellious atheist. (2) God has revealed his "Name" to man; and this gracious visitation from the Father of our race has raised man in the scale of being. (3) When renewed by the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Chalmers's 'Astronomical Discourses' are of permanent value in connection with such a theme as this.

Holy Ghost, he is elevated still higher in the scale, for "after God he is created in righteousness and true holiness." (4) When the Son of God became "the second Man, even the Lord from heaven," then, indeed, was our nature "crowned with glory and honour." Nothing so exalted our race as the Son of God inserting himself into it by his incarnation, and so becoming the Son of man. 2. *His prospective dignity.* The psalm includes the vision of the seer as well as the song of the saint. Its repeated quotation (1 Cor. xv. 27; Heb. ii. 6—9) in the New Testament shows us that its words await a grander fulfilment than ever.<sup>1</sup> The preacher may indefinitely expand and illustrate the following points: (1) The dominion of man over nature is vastly greater even now than it was in David's time, and is destined to be more complete than it even now is. David includes the sheep and oxen, beasts of the field, etc. Now fire, water, light, air, lightning, etc., are made to serve man. (2) The renewing process is going forward in the Christianized part of man. The image of God in man is to be perfected. (3) All things are now put under man's feet, in being put under Christ's feet as the Lord of all. But, as Bishop Perowne suggestively remarks, St. Paul's "all things" are immeasurably more than David's "all things." Just so. This is a beautiful illustration of the progress of revelation. The later the date, the brighter the light. And words caught from men who were in the ancient time borne along by the Holy Ghost, are shown to have a very much broader and deeper meaning than their human penmen could possibly have conceived. "The New Testament is latent in the Old. The Old Testament is patent in the New" (Augustine).

Note: 1. The true greatness of man can only be manifested as he is renewed by the Spirit of God; and comes to grow up into him in all things who is the Head, even Christ. 2. How incomplete would the plan have been of permitting man to have dominion over nature, without the corresponding purpose of God's love gaining dominion over man! Dominion is safe only where there is righteousness.—C.

Vers. 1—9.—*God the glorious Creator.* It is midnight. The sky is bright with stars. As the psalmist muses, the fire burns, and he bursts into song. The psalm is not for Israel alone, but brings before the mind such a vision of the glory of God as the great Creator, as binds all people of every land and age in a brotherhood of worship.

I. GOD'S GLORY REVEALED IN NATURE. The heavens have a purpose. The outward glory images the inward and spiritual glory. The stars are silent witnesses for God. Their size, their order, their steadfastness, their splendour, and their mystery, which grow and deepen as investigation is prosecuted and knowledge increases, all proclaim the greatness of God. And the more the glory of God strikes our eye, the humbler do we feel in his awful presence. "When I have gazed into these stars," said Carlyle, "have they not looked down upon me, as if with pity, from their serene spaces, like eyes glistening with heavenly tears over the little lot of man?" But while the glory of God in the heavens is fitted to humble us, it also awakens aspiration. It is the same God who rules above and below. If God so cares for stars, will he not much more care for souls? The argument of our Lord applies to the heavens as well as the earth—to the creation above and beneath. "Are ye not much better than they?" (Matt. vi. 26).

II. GOD'S GLORY MORE FULLY REVEALED IN MAN. It may be said that in man mundane creation first of all became intelligent, self-conscious, endowed with conscience and will, able so far to understand its Maker. Man is the last and fullest expression of God's thought—a being like himself, and that can hold communication with himself. It is only through man, made in God's image, that God could rightly reveal himself. If the heavens stood alone, there would be silence. But when man was created, there was an eye made to see, and a heart to feel, and a voice to proclaim God's praise. 1. *The greatness of man's being.* 2. *The dignity of his position.* The last is first. Man is put at the head of creation. The past has evidence of his lordship, and more and more his sway increases. It is his, not only to replenish, but to subdue the earth. 3. *The grandeur of his destiny.* He has not only a great past, but a great future. God has not only given man his being, but provided also for his well-being. He has visited and redeemed his people (Eph. i. 3—10).

<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Perowne's notes on this psalm.

III. GOD'S GLORY MOST PERFECTLY REVEALED IN CHRIST. What is dimly seen in creation and in man awakens the desire for more light and a fuller knowledge of God. This yearning is met and satisfied in Jesus Christ. He is perfect God and perfect Man. We might conceive of a man simply, so enlightened and swayed by God as that he should in all things be in harmony with God. In so far he might perfectly express God's mind and will. But there is far more in Christ. He is perfect Man and perfect God. He is the true Immanuel—God with us (John xiv. 9, 10). Open, ye heavens, and let us see the Lord as Isaiah did (Isa. vi. 1—3)! Purge our eyes, O Spirit of love and holiness, and let us behold Christ Jesus as Stephen did! and then we shall cry, with wonder, love, and praise, "It is the same Lord, 'my Lord and my God!'" Having such a faith, there is no bound to our hopes. What Christ did, he did for us; what Christ does, he does for us. We died with him and rose with him, and with him we shall be glorified (Eph. i. 17—23).—W. F.

Ver. 2 (cf. Matt. xxi. 16).—*God glorified in little children.* Two pictures: David on the housetop; Christ Jesus, David's Son and Lord, in the temple. With the hosannas of the people blended sweetly the voices of children. The Pharisees were offended; but our Lord was pleased. The words of the old psalm find a new fulfilment. The question for us is—*How God is glorified in little children.*

I. IN THE PLACE WHICH HE HAS GIVEN THEM IN CREATION. They form a part of the great whole. Necessary. Take them away, how different things would be! But they have their place. They are weak, but out of their weakness comes strength. They are helpless, but from their helplessness come endless benefits.

II. IN THEIR CAPABILITY OF RECEIVING CHRISTIAN NURTURE. Children show from the first their powers of growth. Their bodies, their minds, their souls, are constantly developing. By proper care they are capable, under God, of growing up unto Christ, as true and living members of his Church. Christ himself, and not fallen men like Augustine, or Luther, or Bunyan, is the true type and pattern of what children should be (Luke ii. 40).

III. IN THEIR FITNESS TO SERVE AND PRAISE GOD. There is not only simple wonder in children, but also intelligence. Their moral sense is very keen. Their delight in the beautiful and the good is not the result of education, but the instinct of their innocent and pure hearts. How often has God used little children to do his will and show forth his praise! So in the sanctuary, so in life. Remember the infant Moses (Exod. ii. 6), remember David's child (2 Sam. iv. 23), remember the young Josiah (1 Kings xiii. 2); above all, remember the Child of Bethlehem—the Babe in the manger (Luke ii. 10, 11).

IV. AS THE OBJECTS OF HIS TENDER CARE. In manifold ways God has shown how dearly he loves little children. It is he who has established the paternal relationship. It is he who has provided for the holy upbringing of the young, by law and sacrament. It is he who has manifested by his dear Son, in what he taught and did when he was in the world, his tender affection and care for the young (Mark x. 16; Matt. xviii. 2—10).

V. IN TAKING SO MANY OF THEM TO HIMSELF. The heathen had a saying, "Whom the gods love, die young." And in this there is a hidden truth. Death is always a strange and terrible thing; but in the very young it is almost deprived of its terrors. Then it is but a sleep. It is the Lord calling his loved ones early to himself. Happy are we when we can say with unfeigned faith and lively hope, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." If our little ones were left to grow up in this world of sin and sorrow, we know not what their future would be; but we know and are sure that when Christ takes them to himself, it is "far better." They are away from our sight, but not from our hearts. "Love never faileth." They have been taken from our care, but it is to be under better teachers and to receive a nobler education. They have been parted from us, but it is only for a little while; for Christ is gathering his own to himself, and when he cometh, he will bring them all with him. In that day many a stricken heart shall be made glad. "Mother, behold thy son!" "Son, behold thy mother!" Have we the mind of Christ? Are we carrying out worthily the high trust committed to us, of caring for the young? Will our dear children, whom we have lost a while, meet us with joy and welcome in the heavenly world?

"O thou whose infant feet were found  
Within thy Father's shrine,  
Whose years, with changeless virtue crowned,  
Were all alike Divine.

"Dependent on thy bounteous breath,  
We seek thy grace alone,  
In childhood, manhood, age, and death,  
To keep us still thine own."

(Kehle.)

W. F.

**Ver. 9.—The greatness of God in redemption.** "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the earth!" This may be applied to redemption—

**I. IN CHOOSING EARTH AS THE SCENE OF REDEMPTION.** There are millions of other worlds, which we may reasonably believe have their intelligent inhabitants. Out of these the earth was chosen for the highest honours.

**II. IN MAKING MAN THE SUBJECT OF REDEMPTION.** We cannot tell if sin extends to other worlds, but we know that other beings besides man have fallen from their first estate. The angels sinned, but God was pleased to pass them by, and to show his exceeding kindness and love to man in Christ Jesus (Heb. ii. 16).

**III. IN EMPLOYING CHRIST AS THE AUTHOR OF REDEMPTION.** It was not an angel, but his eternal Son, whom God sent to be our Saviour (Gal. iv. 4, 5). And when he came, it was not in the fulness of his glory, but in fashion as a man, born of a woman, made under the Law, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. ii. 6—10).

**IV. IN PROCLAIMING BY THE GOSPEL THE COMPLETENESS OF REDEMPTION.** All men as sinners needed salvation, and the salvation of Christ is suitable and sufficient for all. He is the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and if the whole world should bow in penitence before God, their sins would that moment be all put away.

**V. IN REVEALING THE ETERNAL GLORIES OF REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS SPIRIT.** Already great things have been done. But we look for greater (Rev. xxi. 1—7).—W. F.

**Vers. 1—9.—God's glory revealed.** "The great spiritual truth contained in the first passage of Scripture, that God made man in his own image, flashes forth in this psalm in true lyric grandeur, a ray of light across the dark mystery of creation." God is the most wonderful thought of the human mind, and this thought retains its hold upon us in spite of all atheistic influences. Here the thought is that God's glory is celebrated—

**I. BY CHILDHOOD.** Putting to silence the clamour of the atheist. Christ uses the passage against the scribes and Pharisees, and in another place says that God reveals to babes what he hides from the wise and prudent. We must be converted to little children; "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." God reveals to babes unbounded trust, unbounded obedience to parents, the simple truthfulness, the guileless mind; and they proclaim all this aloud, and it tells of their Divine origin and inspiration, and they thus praise God, and ought to abash the irreligious. "Heaven lies about us [and within us] in our infancy."

**II. BY THE STARRY WORLDS.** The things which tell us most of God are: 1. *Night.* The solemnity and impressiveness of the heavens are greater by night than by day. 2. *Their constancy and order.* 3. *Their immensity.* We cannot compute their number and distances by any effort of thought. 4. *Their silence.* God's greatest works are all done in awful, impressive silence. Then we feel our physical insignificance.

**III. BY MAN'S SPIRITUAL GREATNESS.** (Gen. i. 26—28.) Compared with the material heavens, he is but an atom; but God has "visited him," and made him great, by stamping him with his own image, and giving him the sovereignty of things. He is made a little lower than God, or little less than of Divine standing (*Elohim*). But he is to ascend up to sovereignty. In Heb. ii. 6—8 the words are applied to Christ in a much wider sense, and by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv., because he is more perfected in his highest power, and is to have all rule and all authority. We have only begun to

exercise lordship over the animal, the material, and the moral worlds, and over ourselves. It is only as we rule ourselves that we learn the secret of rule over others. Obedience is the road to sovereignty.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM IX.

THIS psalm, which, like the six preceding it, is declared by the title to be "a Psalm of David," is a song of thanksgiving for the defeat of some foreign enemy. It is the first of what are called "the alphabetic psalms;" but the law of alphabetic order is applied in it somewhat loosely and irregularly. All the four lines of the first stanza commence with *aleph*; but after this it is only the first line of each stanza that observes the law. And even this amount of observance is neglected in the last stanza. The poem is one of the most regular in its structure of all the psalms, consisting as it does of ten equal strophes of four lines each. The words in the title, "upon Muth-labben," have been variously explained; but no explanation hitherto given is satisfactory.

Ver. 1.—I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; rather, *I will give thanks* (Kay, Cheyne, Revised Version). The thanks are special for a great deliverance—a deliverance from some heathen enemy (vers. 5, 15), who has been signally defeated and almost exterminated (vers. 5, 6). It has been conjectured that the subjugation of Ammon (2 Sam. xii. 26—31) is the occasion referred to ('Speaker's Commentary'); but the expectation of further attack (vers. 17—20) scarcely suits this period, when David's wars were well-nigh over. Perhaps the earlier victory over Ammon and Syria (2 Sam. x. 6—14), which was followed by the renewed invasion of the same nations in conjunction with "the Syrians beyond the river" (2 Sam. x. 16), is more likely to have drawn forth the composition. I will show forth all thy marvellous works; rather, *I will tell forth, or I will recount all thy wondrous deeds*. Not necessarily miracles, but any strange and unexpected deliverances, such as the recent one (comp. Ps. xl. 5; lxxviii. 4).

Ver. 2.—I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy Name (see the comment on Ps. viii. 9). O thou most High (comp. Ps. vii. 17; and see also Gen. xiv. 18, 19, 22). Elion (עֵלִיִּן) was a recognized name of God among the Phœnicians ('Religions of the Ancient World,' p. 133).

Ver. 3.—When mine enemies are turned back; or, *because mine enemies are turned back* ('Speaker's Commentary'); i.e. made to retreat, repulsed, driven before me in hasty flight. They shall fall and perish at thy presence; or, *they stumble and perish*, etc. The psalmist represents the enemy, poetically, "as if they had been thrown to the ground by the glance of God's fiery countenance" (Hengstenberg).

Ver. 4.—For thou hast maintained my right and my cause. David uniformly ascribes his military successes, not to his own ability, or even to the valour of his soldiers, but to God's favour. God's favour, which is secured by the justice of his cause, gives him victory after victory. Thou satest in the throne judging right. While the late battle raged, God sat upon his heavenly throne, administering justice, awarding defeat and death to the wrong-doers who had wantonly attacked his people, giving victory and glory and honour to those who stood on their defence against the aggressors.

Ver. 5.—Thou hast rebuked the heathen; rather, *thou didst rebuke*; LXX., ἐπελυσσας: i.e. on the recent occasion. When God would rebuke, he punishes; when he punishes, by so doing he rebukes. Thou hast destroyed the wicked; rather, *thou didst destroy*. Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. If taken literally, this should mean extermination, and so some explain (Hengstenberg, Kay, 'Speaker's Commentary'); but some allowance must be made for the use of hyperbole by a poet. None of the nations with which David contended suffered extinction or extermination.

Ver. 6.—O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end. It is better to translate, with the Revised Version, *The enemy are come to an end; they are desolate for ever*—a continuance of the hyperbole already noticed in the preceding verse. And thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them; rather, *and as for the cities thou hast destroyed, their very memory has perished*. This could only be an anticipation. It was fulfilled in the complete disappearance from history of the names of Zoba, Beth-rehob, and Tob, after the victory described in 2 Sam. x. 13, 14.

Ver. 7.—But the Lord shall endure for ever; rather, *but the Lord is seated* (i.e. upon his throne) *for ever*. Cities and nations perish, but Jehovah remains a King for evermore. While all is change and disturbance upon earth, the unchanged and

unchangeable Eternal One continues constantly seated, in serene majesty, in heaven. He hath prepared (or rather, *established*) his throne for judgment (compare the second clause of ver. 4).

Ver. 8.—And he shall judge the world. The “he” is emphatic—he himself, and no other. From his throne of judgment he shall judge, not Israel’s enemies only, whom he has just judged (vers. 3—6), but *the whole world*. In righteousness; i.e. by a strict law of justice, rewarding to all men “after their deserving.” He shall minister judgment to the people (rather, *the peoples*; i.e. all the people of all the earth) in uprightness; literally, *in uprightnesses*—a plural of perfection.

Ver. 9.—The Lord also will be a Refuge for the oppressed. *Misgib*, translated “refuge,” is literally “a hill-fort” (comp. Ps. cxliv. 2, where it is rendered “high tower”). David’s use of the metaphor is reasonably ascribed to his having “often experienced safety in such places, when fleeing from Saul” (Hengstenberg; see 1 Sam. xxiii. 14). A refuge in times of trouble; literally, *in times in trouble*; i.e. “in times that are steeped in trouble” (Kay).

Ver. 10.—And they that know thy Name will put their trust in thee. “To know the Name of God is to know him according to his historical manifestation; when one hears him named, to call to remembrance all that he has done. His name is the focus in which all the rays of his actions meet” (Hengstenberg). All who “know God’s Name” in this sense will be sure to “put their trust in him,” since his historical manifestation shows that he is thoroughly to be depended on. For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Never in the past, so far as David knew, had God forsaken those who faithfully clung to him. They might be tried, like Job; they might be “hunted upon the mountains,” like David himself; they might even have the sense of being forsaken (Ps. xxii. 1); but they were not forsaken nevertheless. God “forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever” (Ps. xxxvii. 28).

Ver. 11.—Sing praises to the Lord. Having praised God himself (vers. 1, 2), and declared the grounds upon which his praises rest (vers. 3—10), David now calls upon all faithful Israelites to join him in his song of thanksgiving. “Sing praises unto the Lord,” he says, which dwelleth in Zion. Who is enthroned, i.e., on the mercy-seat between the ocherubim in the tabernacle, now set up upon Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 1—17). The date of the psalm is thus to some extent limited, since it must have been composed subsequently to the transfer

of the ark to Jerusalem. Declare among the people his doings. In the original “among the peoples” (עַמִּים); i.e. not the people of Israel only, but all the surrounding nations. David is possessed with the conviction that the revelation of God made to Israel is not to be confined to them, but through them to be communicated to “all the ends of the earth”—to the heathen at large, to all nations (comp. Ps. xviii. 49; lxvi. 4; lxxii. 11, 19, etc.).

Ver. 12.—When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them; rather, *for he that maketh inquisition for blood* (see Gen. ix. 5) *remembereth them*. God, i.e., the Requirer of blood (Kay), remembers, when he makes his inquisition, those who are oppressed (ver. 9), and who seek him (ver. 10). He forgetteth not the cry of the humble; or, *the afflicted* (Kay, Cheyne). He comes to the aid of such persons, and avenges them on their enemies.

Ver. 13.—Have mercy upon me, O Lord! The consideration of God’s mercies in the past, and especially in the recent deliverance, leads the psalmist to implore a continuance of his mercies in the future. He is not yet free from troubles. There are still enemies who afflict and threaten him—“heathen” who seek to “prevail” against him (vers. 19, 20), and perhaps already domestic enemies, especially the “sons of Zeruiah,” causing him anxiety. Consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me; literally, *my trouble* (or, *my affliction*) *from my haters*. Vers. 17, 19, 20 show that the heathen are especially intended (see 2 Sam. x. 15—19). Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death; i.e. “Thou that continually (or, habitually) art my Support in the extremity of peril,” “lifting me up” even from the very “gates of death.” (For other mentions of “the gates of death,” see Job xxxviii. 17; Ps. cvii. 18.) Classical writers speak of “the gates of darkness” (σκότου πύλας) in almost the same sense (Eurip., ‘Hec.’ l. 1).

Ver. 14.—That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. The “daughter of Zion” is, of course, Jerusalem. Compare “daughter of Babylon” (Ps. cxxxvii. 8; Isa. xlvii. 1; Jer. l. 42; Zeoh. ii. 7), “daughter of the Chaldeans” (Isa. xlvii. 1, 5), “daughter of Edom” (Lam. iv. 21, 22), “daughter of Gallim” (Isa. x. 30). Hengstenberg is probably right in understanding “in the gates” as “within the gates,” since, as he observes, “God’s praise is not to be celebrated in the gates, amid the throng of worldly business, but in the temple.” The references in the ‘Speaker’s Commentary’ do not bear out the statement there made, that “public mournings and public thanksgivings were pro-

claimed in the gates." I will rejoice in thy salvation; or, *that I may rejoice* (Kay).

Ver. 15.—The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made. It is uncertain whether the writer here reverts to the judgment already executed (vers. 3—6), or with the eye of faith sees as past the judgment which he confidently anticipates (vers. 19, 20). Whichever he intends, there can be no doubt that he means it to be understood that the stratagems of the enemy brought about (or would bring about) their downfall. In the net which they hid is their own foot taken. A second metaphor, expressing the same idea as the preceding (comp. Ps. vii. 15, 16; x. 2; xxxv. 8; cxli. 10).

Ver. 16.—The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth; rather, *the Lord hath made himself known; he executeth judgment* (see the Revised Version; and comp. Ezek. xx. 9). The two clauses are grammatically distinct, though no doubt closely connected in their meaning. God makes himself known—manifests his character, by the judgments which he executes, shows himself just, perhaps severe, certainly One who "will not at all acquit the wicked" (Nah. i. 3). The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Some translate, "he snareth the wicked," or, "by snaring the wicked"—the special way in which God manifests himself (see Kay, p. 31; 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 190). *Higgaion*. This word is found in three other places only, viz. Ps. xix. 14; xcii. 3; and Lam. iii. 61. In the first it is translated "meditation," and has clearly that meaning; in the second it is supposed to mean "a gentle strain;" in the third it seems best rendered by "musing" or "reflection." Here it stands by itself, as a sort of rubrical direction, like the following word, "Selah." Some suppose it a direction to the choir to play a gentle strain of instrumental music as an interlude; others regard it as enjoining upon the congregation a space of quiet "meditation" (see Hengstenberg, *ad loc.*; and compare Professor Alexander's work, 'The Psalms translated and explained,' p. 45). *Selah* (see the comment on Ps. iii. 2).

Ver. 17.—The wicked shall be turned

into hell; literally, *shall be turned backwards to Sheol, or Hades*; i.e. shall be removed from earth to the place of departed spirits. There is no direct threat of retribution or punishment, beyond the *pœna damni*, or loss of all that is pleasing and delightful in this life. And all the nations that forget God; rather, *even all the people* (Kay). "The wicked" and "the people that forget God" are identical.

Ver. 18.—For the needy shall not always be forgotten. The poor and needy, the oppressed and down-trodden (vers. 9, 12), seem for a time to be forgotten of God; but even this seeming oblivion comes to an end when judgment falls on the oppressors (ver. 17). The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. "The expectation of the poor" is deliverance. It shall not "perish," or be disappointed, "for ever," i.e. always. There shall be a time when their expectation shall have its accomplishment.

Ver. 19.—Arise, O Lord (comp. Ps. vii. 6, and the comment *ad loc.*). Let not man prevail; or, *let not weak man prevail*. The word used for "man," *enôsh*, carries with it the idea of weakness. That "weak man" should prevail over God is preposterous. Let the heathen be judged in thy sight. If judged, then, as being wicked, condemned; if condemned, then punished—defeated, ruined, brought to nought (see ver. 5).

Ver. 20.—Put them in fear, O Lord; literally, *set fear to them*; i.e. "make them afraid," either by striking a panic terror into them, as into the Syrians when they had brought Samaria to the last gasp (2 Kings vii. 6, 7), or by causing them calmly to review the situation, and to see how dangerous it was to assail God's people (2 Kings vi. 23). That the nations may know themselves to be but men. May recognize, i.e., their weakness; may remember that they are *enôsh*—mere weak, frail, sickly, perishing mortals. *Selah*. Here this word occurs for the second time at the end of a psalm (see above, Ps. iii. 8)—a position which militates against the idea of its signifying "a pause," since there must always have been a pause at the end of every psalm.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 10.—*An appeal to experience, and its record.* "They that know thy Name," etc. Truth is given us in Scripture, not as bare doctrine, but clothed in living experience; not as an anatomical preparation for intellect to dissect and anatomize, but as food to nourish; nay, more—as a friend to talk with us. For the best reason—we are not merely to hold it intellectually, but to live by it. Hence the whole Bible, from end to end, is full of human life and history. But, above all, the Book of Psalms is a text-book and encyclopædia of spiritual experience. The text is an appeal to experience, and a record of its testimony.



I. WHO ARE THEY WHOSE EXPERIENCE IS APPEALED TO? Those who *know God's Name*. Names are more than bare *signs* of thought; they are instruments of thought; store-houses and treasuries of knowledge; vessels from which it can be poured; current coin, in which it passes from mind to mind. More than this. They are treasuries of *feeling*; talismans to call it forth; ripe seeds from which its bloom and fragrance spring to new life. Our power of *naming* is the measure of our knowledge. Therefore in Scripture, the *Name* of God stands for *all that we can know* of him. It includes, not only knowledge of the intellect, but of the heart (comp. John xvii. 3, 6 with 1 John iv. 8). "Canst thou by searching," etc.? (Job xi. 7, 8). Surely not. This is a depth we cannot fathom; a breadth and height we cannot measure. But to say this is no concession to the mental indolence of agnosticism. Do not let us underrate what we can and do know of God. 1. *We know him as the Source and Foundation of all being but his own*. Therefore eternal and infinite. It is mere idle ring of verbal logic to say that "from a finite universe you cannot prove an infinite Creator." For, though the universe is (we are compelled to think) in some sense finite, yet it is infinite in possibility, and in demand on knowledge, wisdom, power, love. 2. *We know him as the Father of our spirits*, in whom we live and have our being. As a *Personal Being*; i.e. one to whom we can speak, and who speaks to us. We can say "Thou" to him, and he says "Thou" to each of us. 3. *We know his character*. Perfect righteousness, truth, holiness, love; and his will, as revealed in his Word. 4. *We know him as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (John i. 18). Who, then, are "they that know God's Name"? Those to whom all these truths are not words, but realities; who study his will, and obey it; study his Word, and believe it; live in fellowship with God by prayer and praise; know the power of his love (1 John iv. 16, 19); and see his glory in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. iv. 6). In one word, "the Name" of God is matter of revelation; but the *knowledge of his Name* is matter of experience.

II. WHAT IS THE TESTIMONY OF THEIR EXPERIENCE? This—that God may safely be trusted—is infinitely worthy of unswerving absolute trust. Those who know him best trust him most; and those who have trusted him most bear witness to his faithfulness. We may say that the truth of the whole Bible is involved in the truth of this verse. For what is the Bible from end to end, but an invitation to *trust God*—with the reasons for so doing? A revelation, not so much to intellect as to heart and conscience. With this it is very largely a record of the personal experience of those who have trusted (and also of those who have distrusted) God (Ps. xxxiv. 6). And, withal, it is a challenge to future experience. It invites practical personal test. "Taste and see" (Ps. xxxiv. 8). If the answer were that, *practically, faith in God is found to be a failure*, then the Bible would have missed its mark. Then Christianity must be confessed a beautiful illusion. But the facts are the other way. Go to the Christian—learned or simple, poor or prosperous—who, through a busy life, has made the experiment of trusting God, and bringing everything to the Lord Jesus in prayer. Ask him, "Has it answered?" There is no doubt what his reply will be. If the evidence for the truth of Christianity were to be compressed into one word, that word is "experience." The contemptuous disregard of this immense mass of human experience and testimony by unbelievers is neither rational nor just (see 'Basis of Faith,' p. 359, 3rd edit.).

Vers. 19, 20.—*An appeal to God*. "Arise, O Lord," etc. The mysteries of life are no modern discovery. They perplexed and oppressed the souls of ancient saints, often well-nigh to the overthrow of faith. They are aggravated and emphasized by the fact, which we perhaps fail sufficiently to grasp, that Israel stood alone among nations as the witness to the unity, holiness, and truth of God. The host of surrounding peoples, some of them at the very summit of worldly greatness, worshipped "gods many and lords many." Hence Israel's enemies could not but be regarded as God's enemies; Israel's cause as God's cause.

I. AN APPEAL TO GOD AS THE LORD OF THE WHOLE WORLD, to manifest his sovereignty. The word for "man" expresses mortal weakness. *Q.d.*: "Let not weak mortals fancy themselves strong enough, or seem to others strong enough, to defy thy rule, break thy Law, disregard thy displeasure." Ver. 8 shows that the world of man-kind is in view, not merely Israel. The broad universal spirit of the Old Testament Scriptures is among the notes of inspiration. In the sacred enclosure of Israel the

psalmist saw men sinning against light; in the great outlying world of heathendom, he saw them sinning without the light of revelation (Rom. ii. 12—14). But in all, the root-mischief is the same—*human self-will*. If all men, instead of pleasing themselves, set themselves to do *God's* will, a change would pass over all life, private and public, like the breaking forth of spring out of winter. Faith does not dictate to God *how* or *when* men are to be brought to their right senses; to see that God is God, and men “but men”—weak, frail, ignorant, sinful. But faith longs and pleads that it be done.

II. THERE ARE TIMES AND CIRCUMSTANCES which give to this appeal special urgency. In ancient Israel, when idolatry threatened to suppress true religion; or heathen invaders threatened the national existence. For the Christians of the first three centuries, in the deadly persecutions of the Roman emperors. For lovers of God's pure Word and of freedom, during the dark years before the Reformation, in the gigantic growth of superstition, corruption, and ecclesiastical tyranny. The blood of Albigenes, Lollards, Huguenots, and a great army of martyrs beside, seemed to cry for vengeance (Rev. vi. 10). In our own time the frightful prevalence of crime and vice, and of squalid misery in the midst of wasteful luxury; the murderous war-preparations of Christian nations; the slow progress of the gospel where it is matched against the mighty forces of heathenism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism; and the bold and subtle forms of atheism or unbelief that fill the very atmosphere of our age;—all these awaken in our hearts this earnest, passionate longing; try our faith with this deep perplexity (Isa. lxiv. 1). Multitudes of earnest Christians find no comfort but in the belief that the second coming of the Lord is near at hand. They echo St. John's “come quickly” (Rev. xxii. 20).

III. THE GOSPEL SHEEDS A LIGHT ON THIS MYSTERY, which prophets and kings of old longed for, but could not see (see 2 Pet. iii. 9; 1 Tim. ii. 3). God could crush and stamp out sin, and destroy sinners quickly enough, by his almighty power. But his amazing purpose has been and is to “overcome evil with good;” subdue unbelief and rebellion, not by vengeance, but love. Mercy rejoices against judgment. The cross—grace and truth by Jesus Christ—exerts a power impossible before. The prophets show the possibility of the penitent being pardoned (Isa. i. 18; Ezek. xxxiii. 11, etc.). Yet Manasseh's conversion is almost a solitary instance. The regeneration of a nation—as of nations of cannibal savages in our own day by the preaching of the gospel—was a thing impossible. Hence inspired psalmists saw no alternative but either the prosperity of the wicked or their destruction (Luke ix. 54—56; xxiv. 46, 47). But power will not always sleep, nor judgment tarry (2 Pet. iii. 7, 10; 2 Thess. i. 7, 9).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—20.—*Praise for the destroyer's destruction.* The title of this psalm is obscure. Its archaisms cannot now be satisfactorily explained. And even a reference to the most learned expositors may possibly only increase the confusion.<sup>1</sup> The title, indeed, is very suggestive. It reads, “Upon the death of Labben.” Walford regards “Muth-labben” as the name of a musical instrument. For this we can find no warrant. The word *muth*, which is equivalent to “death,” seems to put us on a line of thought which is, at any rate, in harmony with the entire psalm. If we grant (as appears from the whole tenor of the verses) that the reference is to the death of some enemy, by whose plots and snares the people of God were imperilled, the whole song reads naturally enough. Whether we read “Labben” as a proper name, or read it “of the Son,” or regard the psalm as referring to the death of Goliath of Gath, is of no consequence as regards its general meaning or spiritual significance. Delitzsch, indeed, says, “This psalm is a thoroughly national song of thanksgiving for victory by David, belonging to the time when Jahve was already enthroned on Zion (ver. 14), and therefore to the time after the

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg and Delitzsch may be consulted with advantage; and even Barnes, though often inadequate and not always exact, is instructive on the title of this psalm (see also Calvin). Matthew Poole's ‘Synopsis Criticorum’ has a good summary of the different theories thereon. Keil's ‘Introduction to the Old Testament’ has a very helpful section on the ‘Titles of the Psalms,’ vol. i. § 109. The introduction to Ps. ix. and x. in the ‘Cambridge Bible,’ 1891, should be read, and its notes thereon, throughout.

ark was brought home." He asks, "Was it composed after the triumphant extermination of the Syro-Ammonitish War?" Hengstenberg remarks, "The relation which David had in view when he composed this psalm for public use was that of the Church of God to its external enemies." Note: It is a fitting occasion for sanctuary-song when God's people are delivered from threatening perils. Many English hearts would send up such a shout of praise as we find here, over England's deliverance from the Spanish Armada. The joy, however, was not *in its destruction*, but in Britain's safety. For a pulpit exposition of the psalm, we have five lines of thought presented to us.

I. WE HAVE HERE SHOWN US IN WHAT PERIL GOD'S PEOPLE HAD BEEN PLACED. Although we cannot be sure to what specific events this psalm refers, yet several phrases therein show us the *kind* of peril to which the writer alludes, and thus put both expositor and preacher on the line for usefully and helpfully dealing therewith on any special occasion when unusual perils beset the Church of God. *E.g.*: 1. Enemies (ver. 3). 2. Oppression (ver. 12). 3. Murder (ver. 12). 4. Deceit (ver. 15). Four formidable terms, surely—sufficiently typical of perils which have had to be confronted again and again in the history of God's Church, whether from paganism, or from the papacy, or from mere worldly hostility to goodness and truth.

II. GOD HAD BROUGHT A GREAT DELIVERANCE FOR HIS PEOPLE. The psalm is, owing to this deliverance, one of triumph and joy. 1. It was so illustrious as to be altogether marvellous, yea, miraculous (ver. 1). 2. God had manifested his judgments (ver. 7). 3. He had rebuked the nations (ver. 5). 4. Had brought guilty cities low, and even blotted them out (ver. 6). 5. Had shown himself as the God, the Avenger of innocent blood (ver. 12). 6. Had manifested his remembrance of the poor and of the oppressed (ver. 12). 7. Had made the devices of the wicked to recoil upon themselves. These are but so many illustrative forms of the way in which God's providence is ever working in the world, even now, under the administration of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Head over all things to his Church.

III. SUCH DELIVERANCES HAD THROWN GREAT LIGHT ON GOD'S CHARACTER, WORDS, AND WAYS. They had shown: 1. How truly there is a throne high above all the scheming and plotting of men (ver. 7)! 2. That under the sway of that throne judgment is administered for all who are oppressed. 3. That this judgment is manifested in vindicating right and putting wrong to shame (vers. 7, 8). 4. That such glorious and gracious government reveals the lustre of God's everlasting Name. All providential dealings are disclosers of God. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

IV. A SONG OF GRATITUDE, TRIUMPH, AND TRUST IS HEREBY AWAKENED. The very beginning of the psalm is an outburst of thankfulness (ver. 1). The psalmist gathers from deliverances already effected, a ground of trust in God for future days (vers. 9, 10). Judgments already brought to pass prove that God will not let evil deeds slumber in everlasting forgetfulness, and that he will not let the cry of the humble and down-trodden remain for ever unheard (ver. 12). Yea, more. They prove the glorious truth which is triumphantly proclaimed in ver. 17, "The wicked shall return to Sheol, and all the nations that forget God." Few verses, indeed, have been more violently twisted than this to make it suit the exigencies of mediæval theology. It has been repeatedly dealt with as if it were a sentence on the wicked of everlasting woe. The question of future punishment is dealt with clearly enough in other parts of the Word of God. *But it is not that which is intended here.* The verse means—God will not suffer wicked people or nations perpetually to oppress the Church. In a little, in his own good time, they shall return to the dust whence they came, and enter the invisible realm of the dead.<sup>1</sup> That this is the meaning intended is shown by the verse which follows (ver. 18; cf. also Pa. xxxvii. 10). Cheer up, ye poor, dispirited, and oppressed people of God! Your Vindicator liveth. He will bring you forth to the light when your foes shall have vanished from the scene.

V. THE GRATEFUL SONG OVER MERCIES PAST IS FOLLOWED BY A PRAYER THAT MERCIES YET NEEDED MAY BE VOUCHSAFED. 1. Although there had been a marked deliverance, yet the affliction from which the psalmist had suffered still left its scars upon him. Hence the prayer in vers. 13, 14. The oppression and the oppressor may be speedily removed, but the depression thereby caused lasts long after. And only the

<sup>1</sup> Calvin's striking words on this verse should be pondered.

prolonged bestowal of grace to help in time of need will ever be sufficient to meet the case. 2. The future security of the world depends on the manifestation of the Divine presence and power; in counteracting the base designs of men, in asserting the right, and avenging the wrong (ver. 19). 3. This can only be done, perhaps, by such judgments as will make the nations tremble, and so will cause them to feel their utter impotence in the grasp of the mighty God (ver. 20).

Note: The remarks, applicable to so many psalms, should not be overlooked here. 1. That we have here, not words of God to man, but words of man to God. Hence they may or may not be models for our imitation. Anyway, no inspiration in prayer can rise above the level of the revelation which had been granted where and when such prayer was offered. 2. Although, in every country and age, prayer from the heart must be limited by the measure of light in the conscience, yet a gracious God will answer it, not according to its limitation or imperfection, but according to his infinite wisdom, his boundless love, and his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. 3. The Divine answers to such prayers as we find in the psalm, although they bring deliverance to the righteous, will bring terror and confusion to the wicked. The destruction of Pharaoh's host is the salvation of the hosts of the Lord.—C.

Vers. 13, 14.—“*The gates of death*” and “*the gates of Zion.*” I. THE GATES OF DEATH OPEN BUT ONCE; THE GATES OF ZION OPEN CONTINUALLY. (Heb. ix. 27; Isa. lx. 11.)

II. THE GATES OF DEATH OPEN TO ALL MEN WITHOUT DISTINCTION; THE GATES OF ZION OPEN ONLY TO THE GOOD. (Eccles. ix. 5; John iii. 3.)

III. THE GATES OF DEATH OPEN WITHOUT OUR WILL; THE GATES OF ZION ONLY OPEN ACCORDING TO OUR CHOICE. (Eccles. viii. 8; Matt. vii. 13.)

IV. THE GATES OF DEATH OPEN TO MEN AS TRANSGRESSORS; THE GATES OF ZION OPEN TO THE OBJECTS OF GRACE AND SALVATION. (Rom. v. 12; Isa. xxvi. 1, 2.)

V. THE GATES OF DEATH ARE DARK WITH TERRORS; THE GATES OF ZION ARE BRIGHT WITH HOPE. (Heb. ii. 15; Ps. cxviii. 20.)

VI. THE GATES OF DEATH AND THE GATES OF ZION ARE ALIKE UNDER THE SUPREME CONTROL OF GOD. (Rom. xiv. 8, 9; Rev. i. 18.)

VII. IF WE HAVE ENTERED BY THE GATES OF ZION, AND DWELT THERE WITH GOD, WE NEED NOT FEAR WHEN CALLED TO PASS THROUGH THE GATES OF DEATH. Job asks (Job xxxviii. 17), “Have the gates of death been opened to thee?” They have to others. They will be by-and-by to us. We are always near them and in sight of them, but we have no power over them. We cannot hinder them from opening when it is God's will, nor can we return when once we have passed through them. It cannot be long before our turn comes. Every setting sun, every passing hour, every beat of the pulse, is bringing the time nearer. Happy are we if we are found ready, so that the gates of death may be to us the entering into the city, where we may have right to the tree of life and the endless joys of God (Rev. xxii. 14)!—W. F.

Ver. 14.—*A song of thanksgiving for salvation.* I. SALVATION IS ASCRIBED TO GOD. All deliverances are of God. There may be human means and instruments. There may be judges and saviours, such as Joshua (Neh. ix. 27). But behind all is God. This holds true of all deliverances—national and individual—of the body, and of the soul. More especially is this true of the deliverance from our enemies, and of our redemption by Jesus Christ.

II. MANIFESTS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. God must act in agreement with his character. He cannot deny himself. Therefore in whatsoever deliverances God effects, we may be sure that his righteousness will shine resplendent. So it is of the salvation by Christ (Rom. i. 16, 17). How vain to ask for help, if we are not willing to have it in God's way! How foolish to expect deliverance, save in the form that will glorify God's Name—his righteousness as truly as his mercy, his justice as well as his love!

III. FORESHADOWS THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD. Every judgment is a sign and pattern of the last judgment. There is no change with God. All through, and in everything he does, he has acted like himself. His Law will stand. His righteousness will be vindicated in the end as in the beginning. The cross of Christ

itself prophesies of the just judgments of God. "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 31). God's people may await with confidence the result.

IV. CALLS FORTH THE HALLELUJAHS OF THE GOOD. There is the joy of trust (ver. 13), of gratitude (ver. 14), of hope (vers. 15—20). By faith we see the King in his beauty, and rejoice in his rejoicing.—W. F.

Vers. 1—6.—*Thanksgiving.* This and the following psalm have been considered one poem, written by the same author. This one is in a continued strain of triumph throughout, and was composed, perhaps, by David at the conclusion of the Syro-Ammonite War, or after one of his victories over the Philistines.

I. NATURE OF THE PSALMIST'S THANKSGIVING. 1. *All his powers of mind and soul took part in it.* "With my whole heart." He ascribed his deliverances to God, and not to himself; therefore he was not half-hearted in his praise. 2. *He gathered up in his mental vision the mercies of a lifetime.* "All thy marvellous works." He was filled with a sense of wonder when he thought of the long succession of God's marvellous ways towards him. The last deliverance did not blot out the memory of those that had gone before. 3. *God's condescension filled him with rejoicing gratitude.* He felt that God was "most High," and that he had wonderfully stooped to regard him and his affairs—the same thought as in the previous psalm.

II. THE GROUNDS OF THE PSALMIST'S THANKSGIVING. Speaking generally, it was for deliverance from his enemies. The language here suggests: 1. *That the sense of God's presence with us nerves us against our greatest dangers.* (Ver. 3.) Perils and temptations lose their power over us when we know God to be with us. 2. *God's deliverances from evil spring out of his regard for what is right.* (Ver. 4.) God's righteousness is as much concerned for our salvation as his love and mercy. The rescue of a soul from sin satisfies the sense of infinite right, and is part of the eternal administration of God. 3. *The psalmist saw in prospect the certain destruction of all wickedness, both individual and social.* (Vers. 5, 6.) The prospect of the prevalence and reign of righteousness filled him with holy gladness and thanksgiving. Not only himself, but all righteous persons, would then enjoy peace and safety. One evil man can do much mischief, and work wide ruin; but when cities and governments become corrupt, their power for evil sweeps all virtue out of its path. Therefore David rejoiced in their extirpation. Let us cultivate a thankful spirit for all the wonderful deliverances which God has made possible and actual to us.—S.

Vers. 1—6.—*The cause of gratitude.* To derive benefit from the study of any ancient writings, we must translate them into our present forms of thought and ways of thinking. David as king sang these hymns to God for the nation and to the nation, and for himself; for he and the people were one. It is difficult for us to realize this, being, as we are, in lower stations and with an intenser feeling of our individuality.

I. THE PRELUDE TO THIS SONG. He praises God for his *marvellous works* and for his *supremacy*. 1. They captivated and subdued his *whole nature*: "With my whole heart." 2. They filled him with *joy*. 3. He published them to *others*.

II. THE SPECIAL CAUSES OF HIS GRATITUDE. God had judged his cause and maintained the right by subduing his enemies. 1. *We too have enemies to be subdued*—difficulties and temptations and hindrances which threaten our safety and destroy our peace. 2. *David overlooks his own instrumentality in his victories by thinking only of the great First Cause of them.* He saw God in everything. We lose sight of the cause in the instrument, and are not so devout as he. We see law where he saw a person. The highest men see both—the law which prescribes the way of conquest, and him who imparts the needed strength to obey.

III. DAVID REJOICED OVER THE COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF HIS ENEMIES. 1. He thought it right to rejoice over the destruction of human life; for he thought God sanctioned and did it. 2. Our outward difficulties may vanish, while the inward may remain. 3. We shall fully rejoice only when all our enemies, inward and outward, are vanquished.—S.

Vers. 7—12.—*A righteous God.* Experience is the great teacher; and especially as

to our knowledge of the Divine nature. From what God has *done* (vers. 3—6) we are able to learn what he *is*, viz. righteous, and a Helper of the oppressed.

I. GOD'S RULE IS A CONTINUAL EXERCISE OF JUDGMENT. (Vers. 7—9.) 1. *This seals the doom of the unrighteous.* It will destroy them and their works (vers. 5, 6). 2. *This secures the safety and the triumph of the righteous.* Ultimately and really, if not immediately and in appearance. 3. *This is a comfort and a refuge for those who suffer from injustice and oppression.* (Ver. 9.) God is a strong Tower, into which they may run and find shelter from their troubles.

II. THE GROUNDS OF FAITH IN GOD. 1. *When we know how to name him.* (Ver. 10.) Jacob wanted to know the name of the Being who wrestled with him, because the true name indicates the true nature. In our ignorance of the nature of things, we give arbitrary names; but if we have learnt anything of the nature of God, we shall know his true name, and then shall be able to trust in him without fear at all times. 2. *God reveals himself as the faithful God to those who earnestly seek him.* (Ver. 10.) And to none else. We can never prove the fidelity of any one of whom we have never felt the need. And we never seek earnestly for any one unless he becomes in some way necessary to us. And it is only thus, by experience, we find that God does not forsake those who seek him. Knowledge, faith, and experience are thus connected.

III. GROUNDS OF THE JOYFUL WORSHIP OF GOD. 1. *God specially dwells in the Church.* (Ver. 11.) The glory between the cherubim was in Zion. He gathers with his people where they gather, and specially manifests himself. "Where two or three are gathered together," etc. 2. *It is a high privilege to know and declare to others the Divine work.* (Ver. 11.) To be able to expound God's work truly is to help to bring God nearer to men, and so to help to save them. 3. *God always remembers the cause of the afflicted.* (Ver. 12.) The meaning is—God will not let the murderer go unpunished, but will avenge the relatives of the murdered man, and so relieve and console their sufferings. But he hears the cry of all afflicted ones, whatever the cause of their sufferings, and comforts them by his Spirit.—S.

Vers. 13—20.—*Prayer to God.* Previous verses have celebrated the triumph of the Divine righteousness in punishing the wicked and defending the cause of the oppressed. Vers. 13 and 14 are a personal prayer, interrupting the flow of the general strain of the psalm. Luther says, "In the same way do all feel and speak who have already overcome some tribulation, and are once more oppressed and tormented. They cry and beg that they may be delivered."

I. THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER TO THE RIGHTEOUS GOD. (Vers. 13, 14.) 1. *The appeal.* "Graciously see or consider my trouble. I am unjustly suffering from the hatred of men. If thou wilt only look upon the fact as it is, then I am confident thou wilt interpose and save me." For the Divine sympathy is always on the side of justice. 2. *The arguments which enforce the appeal.* Two. (1) *He had had many deliverances from dangers nearly fatal.* From the gates of death. Experience taught him faith and hope. (2) *He would proclaim the Divine praise in the most public place.* "In the gates," etc. (ver. 14). He felt that that would be acceptable to God. (But see the Exposition.)

II. THE DIVINE WORK IS A REVELATION OF THE DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Vers. 15—18.) 1. *The plots of the wicked become the means of their own destruction.* (Vers. 15, 16.) Because the righteous Being overrules in the affairs of men. No wicked schemes can be so well laid but that in the end they ruin him who laid them. We have examples of this in the first and third Napoleons, and constantly recurring ones in more private life. 2. *The premature end of the ungodly.* (Ver. 17.) "The wicked must return to the unseen world"—sooner than others, is implied (not "the wicked shall be turned into hell"). Wickedness and vice tend to shorten life. 3. *The righteous expectation of the afflicted shall be fulfilled.* The poor and the afflicted hope in God, and their hope shall not be disappointed. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love."

III. AN URGENT CALL UPON GOD TO GIVE STILL MORE EVIDENT PROOF OF HIS RIGHTEOUS RULE. (Vers. 19, 20.) "Arise, O Lord, let not man have the upper hand: let not weak man carry himself as if he were strong." What is needed to put men

in fear is some irresistible work of judgment among men, that shall put God's supreme rule beyond all doubt. There is something here of impatience—a wish to hasten God's slow but sure methods of maintaining the cause of truth and righteousness in the world.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM X.

THIS psalm is to some extent connected with the preceding one, but not very closely. It has turns of expression which are identical, and not common elsewhere; e.g. "in times of trouble" (ver. 1; comp. Ps. ix. 9), and much similarity in the thoughts (comp. ver. 2, "Let them be taken," etc., with Ps. ix. 15, "In the net which they hid is their foot taken;" ver. 12, "Forget not the humble," with Ps. ix. 12, "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble;" ver. 16, "The heathen are perished out of the land," with Ps. ix. 5, 6; and ver. 4, "God is not in all his thoughts," with Ps. ix. 17, "The nations that forget God"). The metrical structure is thought to be similar ('Speaker's Commentary'), and there is the same imperfect and irregular employment of alphabetic arrangement. Moreover, in the Septuagint Version the two psalms are run into one; and the unusual absence of a title in the Hebrew raises the suspicion that they were once united there also. Yet in their subject they are markedly different. Ps. ix. is concerned almost wholly with the heathen, Ps. x. with the wicked, by which we must understand wicked Israelites. The former is a psalm of praise and thanksgiving, the latter one of complaint and entreaty; the former is triumphant and exulting, the latter menacing and mournful. Possibly they were composed about the same time, and with some reference of the one to the other, Ps. ix. being a review of Israel in its external relations, and Ps. x. a review of Israel in its internal relations and prospects.

Ver. 1.—Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Here is the key-note struck at once. Why does God stand aloof? Why, after delivering his people from their foreign foes, does he not interfere to protect his true people from their domestic oppressors? "Throughout the reign of David," as it has been truly observed, "Palestine was infested by brigands, and disturbed by a factions nobility" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol.

iv. p. 191). Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? "Verily thou art a God that *hidest* thyself," says Isaiah (xlv. 15). And so Job complains, "He *hideth* himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him" (xxiii. 9). He seems neither to see nor hear. The psalmist inquires—Why? It can only be answered, "In his wisdom; for his own purposes; because he knows it to be best."

Ver. 2.—The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor. Dr. Kay translates, "Through the pride of the wicked man the poor is set on fire;" and our Revisers, "In the pride of the wicked, the poor is hotly pursued;" and so (nearly) the LXX., the Vulgate, Aquila, Symmachus, Köhler, Hengstenberg, and others. The Authorized Version paraphrases rather than translates; but it does not misrepresent the general sense, which is a complaint that the poor are persecuted by the wicked. Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined (comp. Ps. xxxv. 8, "Let his net that he hath hid catch himself;" and Ps. cxli. 10, "Let the wicked fall into their own nets;" see also Ps. vii. 15, 16; ix. 15; Prov. v. 22; xxvi. 27; Eccles. x. 8). Some, however, translate, "They (*i.e.* the poor) are ensnared in the devices which they (*i.e.* the wicked) have imagined;" and this is certainly a possible rendering. Hengstenberg regards it as preferable to the other "on account of the parallelism and connection."

Ver. 3.—For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire; rather, *for the wicked sings praise over his own soul's greed*. Instead of praising God, he praises his own greed and its success (comp. Hor., 'Sat.' i. 1. 66, "At mihi *plaudo* ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemtor in arca." And blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth; rather, *and when he gets a gain blesses* (but) *despises the Lord* (so Kay, Alexander, Cheyne, and Hengstenberg). Each time that he gets a gain, he says, "Thank God!"—but, in thanking God for an unjust gain, he shows that he despises him.

Ver. 4.—The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts. The construction is concise to abruptness, and it is hard to determine the ellipses. The passage in the original runs thus: "The wicked, in the height of his scorn—will not require—no God—all his thoughts."

Of the various attempts to supply the ellipses, and obtain a satisfactory sense, the following (that of the 'Speaker's Commentary') is probably the best: "As for the wicked to the height of his scorn—'God will not require'—'There is no God'—such are all his thoughts." (Compare the Revised Version, which is not very different.) The general sense is that his pride conducts the wicked man to absolute atheism, or at least to practical atheism (comp. vers. 11, 13).

Ver. 5.—His ways are always grievous; rather, *firm*; i.e. steadfast and consistent, not wavering and uncertain. The thoroughly wicked person who "neither fears God nor regards man," pursues the course which he has set himself, without deviation, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. There is nothing to hinder him—no qualm of conscience, no distrust of himself, no fear of other men's opposition. Thy judgments are far above out of his sight. They are held in reserve; he does not foresee them—he does not believe in them. As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. His human adversaries he wholly despises, believing that a breath from his mouth will bring them to nothing.

Ver. 6.—He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved (comp. Ps. xxx. 6). The idea of continuance is instinctive in the human mind. "The thing that has been, it is that which shall be" (Eccles. i. 9). We expect the sun to rise each day, solely because in the past it has always risen (see Butler's 'Analogy,' part i. ch. i.). The wicked man, who has always prospered, expects to prosper in the future; he has no anticipation of coming change; he supposes that his "house will continue for ever, and his dwelling-place to all generations" (Ps. xlix. 11); he thinks that "to-morrow will be as to-day, and much more abundant" (Isa. lvi. 12). For I shall never be in adversity; rather, *unto generation and generation, I am he who will be exempt from calamity*. The wicked man has no thought of dying—he will be prosperous, he thinks, age after age.

Ver. 7.—His mouth is full of cursing. (On the prevalence of this evil habit among the powerful in David's time, see Ps. lix. 12; cix. 17, 18; 2 Sam. xvi. 7.) And deceit and fraud; or, *guile and extortion* (Kay); comp. Ps. xxxvi. 3; lv. 11. Under his tongue is mischief and vanity; rather, as in the margin, *mischief and iniquity*. These are stored "under his tongue," ready for utterance whenever he finds a fit occasion.

Ver. 8.—He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages. These "lurking-places" must not be supposed to have been inside the villages, but outside of them. They

were retired spots at no great distance, where brigands or others might lie in ambush, ready to seize on such of the villagers as might show themselves. In the secret places doth he murder the innocent (comp. Job xxiv. 14). The usual object would be, not murder, but robbery. Still, there would be cases where it would be convenient to remove a man, as Jezebel removed Naboth; and moreover, in every case of robbery, there is a chance that the victim may resist, and a struggle ensue, in which he may lose his life. His eyes are privily set against the poor; or, *his eyes lay ambush for the helpless* (Kay). The word translated "poor" (רָעֵב) is only found in this place and in ver. 10, where the antithesis of "strong ones" seems to imply that the weak and helpless are meant.

Ver. 9.—He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den; or, *he lurks in the covert as a lion in his lair* (Kay)—a very striking image! He lieth in wait (or, *lurks*) to catch the poor; he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net; rather, *by drawing him into his net*. The mode of capture is intended.

Ver. 10.—He croucheth, and humbleth himself; rather, *crushed, he sinks down*. The subject is changed, and the poor man's condition spoken of. That the poor may fall by his strong ones; rather, *and the helpless* (comp. ver. 8) *fall by his strong ones*. The "strong ones" are the ruffians whom the wicked man employs to effect his purposes.

Ver. 11.—He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten (comp. vers. 4, 13). "The wish is father to the thought." As Delitzsch says, "The true personal God would disturb his plans, so he denies him. 'There is naught,' he says, 'but destiny, and that is blind; an absolute, and that has no eyes; an idea, and that has no grasp.'" He hideth his face. He looks away; he does not wish to be troubled or disturbed by what occurs on earth. So the Epicureans in later times. He will never see it (comp. Job xxii. 12; Ps. lxxiii. 11; xciv. 7).

Ver. 12.—Arise, O Lord (comp. Ps. ix. 19). At this point the psalmist passes from description to invocation. From ver. 2 to the end of ver. 11 he has described the conduct, the temper, and the very inmost thoughts of the wicked. Now he addresses himself to God—he summons God to arise to vengeance. As Hengstenberg says, "Here the second part begins—prayer, springing out of the lamentation which has preceded;" prayer and invocation, beginning here, and terminating at the close of ver. 15. O God, lift up thine hand; i.e. to strike, to take vengeance on the wicked. Forget not the humble; or, *the afflicted*. Do not justify the hidden thought of the wicked (ver.



11), that thou forgettest—show that thou rememberest at once the sufferings of the afflicted, and the guilt of their oppressors.

Ver. 13.—Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God? God's long-suffering does but make the wicked despise him. Wherefore is this allowed to continue (comp. ver. 1)? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it; rather, as in the Prayer-book Version, *while he doth say in his heart* (see vers. 6, 11).

Ver. 14.—Thou hast seen it. The most emphatic contradiction that was possible to the wicked man's "He will never see it" (ver. 11). God sees, notes, hears in mind, and never forgets, every act of wrong-doing that men commit, and especially acts of oppression. For thou beholdest mischief and spite; or, perhaps, *mischief and grief* (see Job vi. 2); i.e. the "mischief" of the oppressors, and the "grief" of the oppressed. (so Hengstenberg, Cheyne, and the 'Speaker's Commentary'). Others refer both words to the feelings of the oppressed, and translate, "travail and grief." To requite it with thy hand. Again the Prayer-book Version is preferable, "to take the matter into thy hand," both for reward and requital. The poor committeth himself unto thee. He has no other possible refuge—therefore no other reliance. Thou art the Helper of the fatherless. The word "thou" is emphatic—"Thou, and no other (rege)."

Ver. 15.—Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man; i.e. "break thou his strength; take away his ability to work evil to others." Seek out his wickedness till thou find none; rather, *require his wickedness*. The verb is the same as that used in the last clause of ver. 13. The wicked man had said in his heart, "Thou wilt not require;" the psalmist calls on God, not only to require, but to require to the uttermost. Seek out, he says, require, and bring to judgment, *all* his wickedness—every atom of it—until even thy searching eye can find no more to require, requite, and punish.

Vers. 16—18.—Here begins the third part of the psalm. It is, as has been observed, "confident and triumphant." The psalmist has, in the first part, shewn the wickedness of the ungodly; in the second, he has prayed for vengeance on them, and for the deliverance of their victims; in the third, he expresses his certainty that his prayer is heard, and that the punishment and deliverance for which he has prayed are as good as accomplished.

Ver. 16.—The Lord is King for ever and ever (comp. Ps. xxix. 10; xlii. 10). Thus God's kingdom is established, his authority vindicated, his absolute rule over all men made manifest. Internal and external foes are alike overcome. The heathen—whether uncircumcised in the flesh or in the heart (Jer. ix. 25, 26)—are perished out of his (Jehovah's) land.

Ver. 17.—Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble (comp. Ps. ix. 12). It is not the psalmist's prayer alone that he regards as heard and answered. The oppressed have cried to God against their oppressors, and their cry has "come before him, and entered into his ears." Thou wilt prepare their heart; rather, *thou dost establish (or, make firm) their heart*. Through their conviction that thou art on their side, and art about to help them. Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear; or, *thou causest*.

Ver. 18.—To judge the fatherless (see ver. 14) and the oppressed; i.e. to vindicate them—to judge between them and their oppressors. That the man of the earth may no more oppress; or, *that terrene man may no longer terrify*. There is a play upon the two words in the original, which might thus be rendered. But it has been said, with truth, that this sort of rhetorical ornament "does not suit the genius of our language" (Krie).

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 13.—*The protest of faith against sin.* "Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God?" etc. This psalm is one of those which utter with burning fervour the protest of faith against unbelief, of righteousness against iniquity, of loyalty to God against rebellion. To understand these utterances, we must try to see *sin* as it is in itself, apart from the gracious light of forgiving mercy which the gospel sheds—as they saw it who had to live the life of faith when no cross had been set up, no sacrifice offered "for the sins of the whole world," no gospel of forgiveness preached to the nations. If the prevalence of sin, and its consequent misery, is so heavy a burden to pious hearts to-day, what must it have been *then*?

I. A TERRIBLE VIEW OF SIN: CONTEMPT OF GOD. Wilful transgressors *despise God*. 1. They are *regardless of his Law*. (1 John iii. 4.) It is written on their conscience. The blessing of obedience and the curse of disobedience are inwoven in their very nature;

for besides that some sins (drunkenness, gluttony, lust, and sloth) destroy even the body, *the man himself is worse*, mentally, in character, for every sin he commits. 2. *They are careless of God's honour.* Sin insults and dishonours God—a greater crime than all the injury it does to man. 3. *They despise his call to repentance.* (Isa. i. 18; Acts xvii. 30.) 4. *They defy his displeasure* and are reckless of his judgment (Luke xiii. 3, 5).

II. A QUESTION ASKED AND ANSWERED. "Wherefore," etc.? Because "he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it" (so ver. 11). Men persuade themselves that, as they forget God, so he forgets them. That is all they desire. An ungodly man's notion of forgiveness is mere omission to punish; neglect of justice; indulgence, not because it is right not to punish, but merely because the thought of punishment is too dreadful and painful. "God," he says, "is too merciful to punish." He does not consider or understand that, as it is impossible for God to forget anything, so there would be no true mercy, but the reverse, in the neglect of justice. This is what is meant by "will by no means clear the guilty," even in the very proclamation of Divine mercy (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7).

III. THE FATAL MISTAKE. God has seen, does remember, will require and judge. To build hope for eternity on the supposed negligence and injustice of God, is to try to cross an abyss on a cloud. If God forgives sinners, he must do it justly, on good grounds (Rom. i. 17, 18; ii. 6—9; iii. 23—26). The gospel is the glorious revelation of God's pardoning love and grace, not thrust at random on those who continue to despise him, but freely given to each, even the worst, who seeks to "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20), and lays hold on his promises in Christ (Heb. ii. 3; x. 23, 29).

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—18.**—*Why? or, Hard facts and puzzling questions.* Whether or no this psalm was originally a part of the ninth is a question which, as may be seen, is discussed by many expositors. The mere absence of a title to it is, however, a very slight indication in that direction; while the contrast, almost violent, between the two psalms seems to be sufficient to show that they could scarcely have been penned by the same writer at the same time. The ninth psalm is a song of praise over the great deliverance God had wrought in bringing about the destroyer's destruction. This is a mournful wail over the ill designs and too successful plans of the wicked on the one hand, and over the long silence of God on the other. The ungodly are at the very height of their riotous and iniquitous revelling; and the Divine interposition is passionately and agonizingly implored. We have no clue whatever to the precise period of disorder to which reference is here made. Perhaps it is well that we have not. There have been times in the history of the world and of the Church, again and again, when designing and godless men have been, as it were, let loose, and have been permitted to play havoc with God's people, while the righteous were mourning and the wicked were boasting that God did not interpose to check their cruelties and crimes. And it will be necessary for the student and expositor to throw himself mentally into the midst of such a state of things, ere he can appreciate all the words of a psalm like this. For it is one of those containing words of man to God, and not words of God to man. We have therein—terrific facts specified; hard questions asked; a permanent solace; a forced-out prayer.

I. TERRIFIC FACTS. (Vers. 2—11.) Let every phrase in this indictment be weighed; it presents as fearful a picture of human wickedness as any contained in the Word of God. It sets before us pride, persecution, device, boasting, ridicule, denial of Providence, hardness, scorn, evil-speaking, defying and denying of God, oppression and crushing of the poor, a glorying in deeds of shame, and expected impunity therein.<sup>1</sup> And what is more trying still is, that God seems to let all this go on, and keeps silence, and

<sup>1</sup> Interesting illustrations of some of the phrases here used will be found in Geikie's 'Holy Land and the Bible,' vol. i. pp. 14—16; others from Dr. Thomson's 'Land and the Book,' and J. Gadsby's 'Wanderings,' quoted in Spurgeon's 'Treasury of David,' vol. i. p. 135.

stands afar off, and hides himself in times of trouble.<sup>1</sup> Such trials were felt by the Protestants in their early struggles; by the Covenanters in times of persecution in Scotland; by faithful ones on the occasion of the St. Bartholomew Massacre; by the Waldenses and Albigenses; by Puritans and Independents under Charles I.; by Churchmen under Cromwell; and by the Malagasy in our own times; and it is only by the terror of such times that psalms like this can be understood.

II. **HARD QUESTIONS.** Of these there are two. One is in the first verse. 1. *Why is God silent?* As we look at matters, we might be apt to say that if God has indeed a people in the world, he will never let them fall into the hands of the destroyer; or that, if they are oppressed by evil men, God will quickly deliver them out of their hands, and will show his disapproval of their ways. But very often is it otherwise—to *sight*, and then faith is tried; and it is no wonder that Old Testament saints should ask “Why?” when even New Testament saints often do the same! But we know that to his own, God gives an inward peace and strength that are better marks of his love and better proofs of his timely aid than any outward distinction could possibly be. Take, *e.g.*, the case of Blandina in the times of early persecution; and the cases of hundreds of others. And besides this, it is by the Christ-like bearing of believers under hardships such as these, that God reveals the reality and glory of his redeeming grace (see 1 Pet. iv. 12—14). 2. A second question is: *Why doth the wicked condemn God?* Ah! why does he? He *does* condemn God in many ways. (1) His inward thought is, “There is no God” (ver. 4). (2) He denies that God will call him to account (ver. 13). (3) He denies that God watches his actions (ver. 11). (4) He lulls himself in imagined perpetual security (ver. 6). Thus the life of such a one is a perpetual denial or defiance of God. And all this is attributed (a) to “pride” (ver. 4); (b) to love of evil as evil (ver. 3). And yet the psalmist, seeing through the vain boast of the ungodly, may well peal out again and again the question, “Why does he do this?” for the implied meaning of the writer is, “Why does he do this, when, in spite of all his proud glorying in ill, he knows that God will bring his wickedness to an end, and will call him to account for it?” This is the thought which connects our present division with the next.

III. **PERMANENT SOLACE.** However hard it may be to interpret the ways of God at any one crisis, yet the believer knows that he must not judge God by what he sees of his ways, but ought to estimate his ways by what he knows of God. And there are four great truths known about God by the revelation of himself to man. 1. Jehovah is the eternal King (ver. 14). 2. God is the Helper of the fatherless (ver. 14). 3. God is known as the Judge of the oppressed (ver. 18; cf. Ps. ciii. 6; xciv. 8—23). 4. God hears his people's cry (ver. 17). When believers know all this, they have a perpetual source of relief even under the heaviest cares. God's plan for the world, in his government thereof by Jesus Christ, is to redress every wrong of man, and to bring about peace, by righteousness (Ps. lxxii. 2—4).

IV. **FERVID PRAYER.** (Vers. 12, 15.) Times of severest pressure are those which force out the mightiest prayer (Acts iv. 33—30). Luther, etc.; Daniel (ii. 16—18; ix. 1—19). The true method of prayer is thus indicated, viz. to ascertain from God's revelation of himself, what he is and what are his promises, and then to approach him in humble supplication, pleading with him to reveal the glory of his Name, by fulfilling the promises he has made; and when our prayers move in the direct line of God's promises, we are absolutely sure of an answer (but see Ps. lxxv. 5; Rev. viii. 4, 5; Deut. xxxiii. 26—29). To-day is a day of God's concealing himself; but his day of self-revealing is drawing nigh.—C.

Vers. 1—18.—*Times of darkness and fear.* The experiences of the psalmist may differ from ours, but by faith and sympathy we can enter into his feelings. Besides, there is always more or less of trouble. Life is full of vicissitudes. Times of darkness and of fear come to all. Not from one, but from many, the cry goes up to Heaven, “Why standest thou afar off?”

I. **THE COMPLAINT.** (Vers. 1—11.) Why? Perplexity and fear are natural because of the silence of God. What makes his silence the more awful is that it is *in sight of the sufferings of the good* (ver. 2). On every side evil abounds. Truth, justice, benevolence,

<sup>1</sup> See homily by the writer in ‘Pulpit Commentary: Revelation,’ viii. 1, “Silence in heaven.”

are set at naught. Might prevails against right. Righteousness is fallen in the dust. Oppression has reached such a height that it seems as if it would finally triumph. The mystery deepens, when we mark that God's silence is in *the hearing of the vauntings of the wicked* (vers. 3—11). The proud not only boast of their strength, but exult in their success. They have accomplished their evil desires. They parade their insolence and scorn in the very hearing of Heaven. Seeing there is no judgment executed, they harden their hearts, and hold on their way with reckless hardihood.

**II. THE APPEAL.** (Vers. 12—18.) The cry is impassioned and urgent. God's truth and honour are concerned. Redress must be given, else things will soon be beyond remedy. 1. *The experience of the past is urged.* (Ver. 14.) God is just. What he has done is earnest of what he will do. His deeds bind him as well as his promises. 2. *The present also bears witness.* (Ver. 5.) There is requital even now. As surely as the good is blessed in his deed, the wicked is cursed in his wickedness. 3. *The future is therefore anticipated with confidence.* (Ver. 6.) As the singer muses on the character and ways of God, he rises to a bolder strain. Faith sees the vision of coming judgment. There are sore trials, there are great perplexities, but God is just. He is not indifferent. He is not helpless. He is not slack concerning his promise. But he waits in long-suffering mercy for the fit—the appointed time. A prepared heart will always find a prepared God (vers. 16—18): "Thou wilt cause thine ears to hear." Men may give their ears, and no more. Not so God. He not only hears, but acts. There is the tenderest pity; but there is also the most tremendous power. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—W. F.

**Ver. 4.—Man's thoughts.** **I. MAN HAS THOUGHTS.** He can direct his mind to the past, the present, the future. He can speculate as to the manifold things that come before him and affect his interests. It is his glory that he can think; it is his shame that he so often thinks foolishly.

**II. MAN'S THOUGHTS DEPEND UPON HIS MORAL CONDITION.** We are creatures of feeling. What is uppermost in our hearts will be uppermost in our thoughts. The good man has good thoughts, the evil man evil thoughts. Change the character of the heart, and you change the character of the thoughts (Prov. xii. 5; xv. 26; Matt. xii. 33).

**III. WHEN THE MORAL DISPOSITION IS CORRUPT, THE TENDENCY IS TO EXCLUDE GOD FROM THE THOUGHTS.** The plan, the labours, the enjoyments of life are too often without God (Luke xii. 19, 20; Jas. iv. 13). This is irrational, criminal, and ruinous (Ps. cxlvi. 4).—W. F.

**Vers. 17, 18.—Trial in three aspects.** **I. TRIAL AS A PAINFUL INFLICTION.** "For the present . . . grievous" (Heb. xii. 11).

**II. AS A HOLY DISCIPLINE.** There is a "needs be." God means us good, to make us partakers of his holiness.

**III. AS A SALUTARY EXPERIENCE.** David says, "It was good for me that I was afflicted," and he gives reasons for this. Looking back, humbled and awed, but grateful, we can praise God for his judgments as well as for his mercies. We have the witness in ourselves that God is love, and that when he chastens us it is for our good. Thus we learn to suffer and to wait. The future is bright with hope. In the heavenly world to which we aspire there shall be no more pain, no more sorrow, nor crying, nor tears. Christ will make all things new.—W. F.

**Vers. 1—18.—The righteous God.** The one grand thought which runs through this psalm and most of the Old Testament literature is that God, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, is a Righteous Being, and that all wickedness must be punished and overthrown. In this psalm two principal thoughts are vividly pictured forth, and a prayer.

**I. A COMPLAINT TO GOD OF THE DARING ATHEISM OF THE WICKED.** (Vers. 1—11.)

1. *He imagines himself to be above all restraint, human or Divine.* (Vers. 2—4.) Proud, boastful, blessing the robber, despising God, *blind*. "He requireth not; there is no God." 2. *He feels safe and prosperous.* (Vers. 5, 6.) 3. *His ways are full of deceit and violence.* (Vers. 7, 8.) This is a description of the wicked man in the very fulness

and monstrosity of his evil power. 4. *The cruelty of his ways.* (Vers. 9—11.) He is compared to a ravenous lion. His ferocity is entirely unrestrained, because either there is no God or he will not concern himself with the fate of the oppressed and afflicted.

II. A PRAYER FOR GOD'S INTERPOSITION. (Vers. 12—15.) 1. *Founded upon the contrast between the thoughts of the wicked and the actual conduct of God.* (Vers. 12—14.) 2. *And upon the expectations of the helpless and the forlorn.* (Ver. 14.) "The helpless leaveth it to thee, and thou wilt not disappoint him." 3. *Wickedness can be destroyed and made to disappear from amongst men.* (Ver. 15.)

III. THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH. The psalmist looks upon God's work of comfort and salvation as being quite as certain in the future as if they had been works done in the past. 1. *Jehovah is King for ever and ever.* (Ver. 16.) Nothing can overturn his eternal will. 2. *The future triumph of God's righteousness is regarded as already completed.* (Vers. 17, 18.) The beginning of the work which he has seen gives him faith that it will be perfected. "Perfect that which concerneth us." "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ."—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XI.

ASCRIBED to David in the "title," this psalm is almost universally allowed to be his. It "has all the characteristics of the earlier Davidic psalms." No allusion enables us to assign it to any particular occasion; but, on the whole, it would seem to belong most probably to the period of David's residence at the court of Saul, when he had provoked the jealousy of the courtiers, and calumnious accusations were being continually brought against him. At such a time his friends and companions may well have lost heart, and advised him to "flee away to the mountains." But David flees to God (ver. 1), and trusts in him for deliverance from his persecutors (vers. 4—7).

Ver. 1.—In the Lord put I my trust; or, in the Lord have I taken refuge (Kay, Oheyne). Before his friends address him on the subject of his danger, David has himself recognized it, and has fled to God for succour. How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? rather, *flee ye, birds, to your mountain.* Probably a proverbial expression, used when it was necessary to warn a man that in flight lay his only safety. The singular (*חַי*) is used collectively.

Ver. 2.—For, lo, the wicked bend their bow. The words are still those of the timid friends. "Lo," they say, "the ungodly are already bending the bow against thee"—preparing, *i.e.*, to attempt thy life. They make ready their arrow upon the string; or, *fit their arrow to the string.* The last thing before discharging it. That they may privily shoot at the upright in heart; literally, that they may shoot amid darkness at the upright in heart (comp. 1 Sam. xix. 1, 2, where, Saul having given orders to

"all his servants, that they should kill David," Jonathan persuades him to hide himself "until the morning").

Ver. 3.—If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The word translated "foundations" is a rare one, only occurring here and in Isa. xix. 10. The meaning of "foundations," first given to it by Aquila, is now generally adopted. We must suppose the timid friends to be still speaking, and to mean that, under the lawless rule of Saul, the very foundations of society and of moral order were swept away; the righteous (*צַדִּיק*, a collective) had done and could do nothing to prevent it. What remained for David, but to withdraw from a community where there was neither law nor order, where the first magistrate commanded (1 Sam. xix. 1) and attempted (1 Sam. xix. 10) assassination?

Ver. 4.—The Lord is in his holy temple. David's reply to his timid advisers is an expression of absolute faith and trust in God. Saul may reign upon earth; but Jehovah is in his holy temple (or rather, "palace," *הֵיכָל*) on high—his throne is in heaven, where he sits and reigns. What need, then, to fear an earthly king? Especially when God is not inattentive to human affairs, but his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men (comp. Ps. vii. 9; xvii. 3; cxxxix. 1). His "eyelids" are said to try men, because, when we closely scrutinize a thing, we drop our eyelids and half close our eyes.

Ver. 5.—The Lord trieth the righteous. God tries the righteous, scrutinizing them with his penetrating glance, but a glance wherein there is protection and love. When he tries (or closely scrutinizes) the wicked, the result is different—the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

Ver. 6.—Upon the wicked he shall rain snares. On Divine displeasure follows

Divine punishment—not always speedy, but sure. Those who have plotted against David will have “snares rained” upon them. God is said to “rain” on men both his blessings and his curses, when he gives them abundantly (comp. Job xx. 23; Hos. x. 12; Ezek. xxxiv. 26). By “snares” are meant any difficulties or troubles in which men are entangled by the action of Divine providence. Fire and brimstone. The punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah was the typical example of God’s vengeance to the Israelites generally. And an horrible tempest; literally, a *breath of horrors* (comp. Ps. cxix. 53; Lam. v. 10). It is thought that the sinroom may be intended. But none of the threats are to be taken literally. All that the psalmist means is that God’s vengeance, in some shape or other, will overtake his persecutors. This

shall be the portion of their cup. This is probably the earliest place where the metaphor of a “cup” for man’s lot in life is employed. Other instances are Ps. xvi. 5; xxiii. 5; lxxiii. 10; lxxv. 8; cxvi. 23; Isa. li. 17, 22; Jer. xxv. 15; Ezek. xxiii. 31, 32; Matt. xx. 22, 23; xxvi. 39; John xviii. 11.

Ver. 7.—For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; rather, *for the Lord is righteous; he loveth righteousness* (see the Revised Version); literally, *righteousnesses*; i.e. good and righteous deeds. His countenance doth behold the upright. So the LXX., the Vulgate, Hengstenberg, Bishop Horsley, and others; but the bulk of modern commentators prefer to render, “The upright will behold his countenance.” Either translation yields a good sense.

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The question of fear and the answer of faith.* “If the foundations,” etc. The Bible is God’s gift to a world such as its pages describe. Not a world of aimless holiness and painless peace, but a world of sin, sorrow, strife. A book for pilgrims, toilers, warriors, mourners, sinners. The “sword of the Spirit,” forged in the fire of affliction, tempered in tears. Light in darkness; songs in the night-time; manna in the wilderness; water from the flinty rock; an anchor for the tempest-tossed soul. It leads us along the path beaten by the feet of scores of generations; across ancient battle-fields; shows us the monuments of heroes and conquerors; and fills our daily life with the echoes of the mighty past. Whether or no this psalm belongs to some particular occasion in David’s life—a question of no practical moment—it reflects the stormy experience he and many another saint have had oftentimes to face; and it does this for all time. In these verses we have (1) the question of fear; and (2) the answer of faith.

I. THE QUESTION OF FEAR. “If . . . what shall the righteous do?” The *foundations*, namely, of society; the *pillars or supports* of public order, peace, prosperity. These main pillars are four: *authority, justice, policy, wealth*. If these are shaken, the fabric totters. If they utterly fail, anarchy or tyranny ensues. When war threatens or assails, a weak distrusted government, an unrighteous cause, incapacity, an empty treasury, are more dangerous than any foreign foe. And though there were profound peace as regarded other nations, a nation afflicted with these four evils, one in which these main pillars break, would be on the verge of ruin. Yet underneath all these lies a deeper foundation—*national character* (Prov. xiv. 34). The *particular form* in which public life rested on religion has never been possible for any other nation than Israel. None other has had a *covenant* like that of Sinai—an inspired code of laws; a perfect identity of Church and state. The relations of Church and state differ in different lands; are matter of controversy. This does not change the fact that public as much as private life—that of the nation no less than of the individual—is healthful, safe, prosperous, truly free, only as it conforms to God’s law: is just, truthful, temperate, pure, peaceable, benevolent.

II. THE ANSWER OF FAITH. God reigns; God rules. 1. “In his temple,” *q.d.*, “in heaven.” “His throne”—his supreme omnipotent dominion—is the reign, not of arbitrary power or mere mechanical law, but of *holiness*; perfect righteousness, wisdom, love. Therefore it is the “throne of grace” (Heb. iv. 6). 2. “His eyes behold,” etc. In all this wild confusion, as it seems, nothing is *overlooked*; nothing *unjudged or uncontrolled*. God rules as well as reigns. Never for a moment is his hand off the helm (Rom. viii. 28; Ps. lxxvi. 10). Example: The beneficial results of the Babylonish captivity, in which the ruin of the nation had appeared total and final.

**PRACTICAL LESSONS** (especially in times of political strife and danger). 1. *Courage*. "How say ye," etc.? It is no part of a Christian's duty to flee, either in terror or disgust, from public duty. Public service—as citizen, official, or ruler—progresses under the great Christian law of love to our neighbour (comp. Gal. vi. 10; 1 Pet. iv. 10). Who should be fearless and faithful, if not he who seeks in all to glorify God, and knows that all earthly as well as heavenly power is in Christ's hands (Matt. xxviii. 18)? 2. *Prayer*. (1 Tim. ii. 1—3; comp. 1 Sam. viii. 7—10.) Prayer for our country is a great Christian duty.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—7.—The victory of faith; or, rest amid storm.** In each one of those psalms which represent some historic experience, there is its own differential feature. This feature it is the work of the student and expositor to seize and to utilize. We do not know and have no means of knowing the specific incidents in the writer's life to which reference is here made,<sup>1</sup> although, since David was the writer, we should find but little difficulty in fixing on some passages of his history to which the psalm might possibly apply. But although that might furnish some interesting points of history, it would add little or nothing to the value of the psalm. It is one which is far too much overlooked; since it yields us a powerful illustration of a faith which overcomes the world. Let us set to work and see if it be not so.

**I. HERE IS A BELIEVER IN GOD EXPOSED TO PERIL FROM DESIGNING FOES.** (Ver. 2.) Those who are upright in heart are hated by the wicked (cf. 1 John iii. 12, 13). This is not to be wondered at, for righteous men by their righteousness are a standing condemnation of the ungodly (Heb. xi. 7). The Lord Jesus was pre-eminently the object of hatred by the world (John vii. 7; xv. 18—24). In the time of the psalmist this hatred was expressed by plots for the destruction of God's servants (ver. 2).<sup>2</sup> But, as if conscious of wrong and of the meanness and wickedness of their aims, men sought the cover of darkness for their designs (see ver. 2, Revised Version). What a mercy there is One to whom the darkness and the light are both alike!

**II. HERE ARE WELL-MEANING FRIENDS GIVING THEIR ADVICE.** (Ver. 1, "Flee as a bird," etc.) This is the counsel of timidity. There may possibly be circumstances in which it may be right to take flight (see Matt. x. 23). Although our Lord expected his disciples to be prepared, *if need be*, to lay down their lives for him, yet he did not wish them unnecessarily to expose themselves to danger. So that at times, flight may be wise. But in the case of the psalmist, the whole tenor of his psalm indicates that it would not have been right, and that the counsels of his friends were those of timidity and even of cowardice. Note: 1. We may any of us be exposed at some time or other to this temptation (1) to flee from the spot where we are placed; (2) to quit the duty we have in hand, because of peril; or (3) to resort to some safe nook, and thus consult our own ease and safety, regardless of the work in hand. 2. Such temptation may be even harder to resist when it comes from friends than if it came from foes. So our Lord Jesus found it; he felt Peter's effort to dissuade him from the cross far more acutely than he did Satan's (cf. Matt. xvi. 22, 23).

**III. THIS ILL-JUDGED ADVICE MAY BE ENFORCED WITH PLAUSIBLE ARGUMENTS.** (Vers. 1, 3.) The advice begins with the word "flee" (ver. 1), and ends with the close of the third verse. The arguments for flight are: 1. The secrecy of the designs of the wicked; since they work under cover of the darkness, it is best to be entirely out of their reach. 2. The grievous consequences of their success (ver. 3). If the men who are the strength and glory of a state are removed, the righteous therein will be dismayed.<sup>3</sup> This is a more specious argument than the former: it is equivalent to, "If you care not to flee for your own sake, you owe it to others to guard yourself; for if

<sup>1</sup> The introduction to this psalm in 'The Cambridge Bible' is wise and helpful; so also are the notes on the psalm in both 'The Cambridge Bible' and the edition of the 'Psalter' by the B.T.S.

<sup>2</sup> Revised Version, "in darkness;" LXX, "in a moonless night." See Fausset's 'Studies in the Psalms,' lect. iv. p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> See Fuerst, *sub verb.* נִפְּץ.

you, as one of the supports of the state, are overthrown, what will the righteous people do?" The wicked would rejoice, and would seize the occasion for the purposes of rapine and murder; but the righteous would be in sore dismay.

IV. TO SUCH ADVICE, FAITH HAS A READY ANSWER. (Vers. 4—6.) The various features of this answer may be summed up in one sentence, "The Lord reigneth!" This is faith's rest and refuge in all times of trouble. Things are not left to the cross-purposes of man. There is a throne above all, and One sitting thereon. This fact has a manifold bearing: 1. *On men generally.* (1) God sees all (ver. 4). (2) God tests all (ver. 4). 2. *On the righteous.* (1) God tries his people. He proves them to improve them (ver. 5). (2) He loves the righteous; *i.e.* he approves them, and, in the midst of all confusion, he smiles upon them. (3) He will crown them with honour at last (ver. 7, Revised Version). 3. *On the wicked.* (1) He hates them; *i.e.* he disapproves their ways (ver. 5; Ps. i. 6). (2) The time will come when that disapproval will be manifest (ver. 6). The terrible figures used in this verse are probably drawn from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. What the dread reality may be, of which these words are symbols, God grant that we may never know! More fearful than any physical judgments is the *adverse verdict of the Great Supreme* (John iii. 19). Note: It is all-important for a believer in God, in the midst of the greatest calamities, and of the most serious public disorder, so to maintain his calm serenity of soul, as to enable him thus to rest in what he knows of God and of his revealed mind and will.

V. KNOWING ALL THIS CONCERNING GOD, THE PSALMIST HAD ACTUALLY ANTICIPATED THE ADVICE OF HIS ADVISERS, though in another and a better way (ver. 1): "In the Lord put I my trust;" rather, "To the Lord I have fled for refuge." I need no other. He is mine. He will guard me. I am at rest in him. I will therefore stay where I am, and keep in the path of duty. I can calmly look on the raging storm, and wait till it has passed by. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Note: 1. The man who trusts in God has already a Refuge of which the ungodly man knows nothing. 2. That trust in God gives him the victory over his foes. 3. The God whom he trusts will be his Shield now, and his exceeding great Reward hereafter and for ever!

How much broader, deeper, and firmer should be our trust, now that we know God's love as revealed in Christ! "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John v. 4, 5).—C.

Vers. 1—7.—*A battle in the soul.* Faith and fear are in conflict. Plausible reasons are suggested why the fight should be given up, but nobler thoughts prevail.

I. FEAR CONFRONTING FAITH. (Vers. 1—3.) The outlook is discouraging. Our foes are many and strong; more, they are inveterate in malice; more still, they have already gained ground, and amidst the overturn of all right principles and the confusion worse confounded, it seems as if they were to prevail all along the line. In such a state of things selfish fear suggests—Why fight longer? Our best efforts are fruitless; we are spending our strength and labouring in vain. Better bow to the inevitable; better look to ourselves ere it be too late. The temptation is subtle and dangerous; even the best of us have felt its force. It was Jeremish who said, "I will not speak any more in his Name" (Jer. xx. 9); it was the great Elijah who cried out, as if in despair, "I only am left, and they seek my life" (1 Kings xix. 10). Then there are not wanting false and mistaken friends, who say, as St. Peter to our Lord, "This shall not be unto thee" (Matt. xvi. 22), or as the disciples said to St. Paul, "Go not up to Jerusalem" (Acts xxi. 11—13; Neh. vi. 10, 11). So it has been in all great enterprises. There are lions in the way; difficulties arise that seem to the fearful impossibilities. So it is specially in the Christian life. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," but so also does the fear that rises in our own hearts.

II. FAITH CONQUERING FEAR. (Vers. 4—7.) God's truth is like Constantine's banner: "By this we conquer." 1. *Realizing God's presence.* God is not far off, but near; he is not an indifferent spectator, but pledged to defend the right. The end is in his hands. He will save his people. The presence of an earthly chief gives courage to his soldiers: how much more should we take heart when we know that God is with us! 2. *Confiding in God's protection.* It is not chance, nor caprice, nor arbitrary rule,



that settles things, but the will of God. He "trieth the righteous." There is a holy, loving discipline. The furnace may be hot, but it is for the purifying of the gold (Job xxiii. 10). Let us have patience (Jas. v. 10, 11; 1 Pet. i. 3—7). 3. *Anticipating God's deliverance.* Faith looks beyond the seen. When the vision of God's power is revealed, our fears give place to confidence, our tremblings to tranquillity (2 Kings vi. 17). What God loves must live. What God has promised he will certainly perform (2 Pet. ii. 9).

"Put we our quarrel to the will of Heaven,  
Who, when he sees the hour is ripe on earth,  
Will rain hot vengeance on th' offenders' heads."

(Shakespeare.)  
W. F.

Ver. 7.—"*The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.*" This is true for ever.

I. **RIGHTEOUSNESS IS CONGRUOUS TO GOD'S NATURE.** If light is pleasant to the eye, and music to the ear, and beauty to the soul, it is because they are in the line of rightness. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Eph. v. 29): how much more must God love that which is akin to himself—which is of the very essence of his character!

II. **RIGHTEOUSNESS FULFILLS GOD'S PURPOSES.** What God seeks is righteousness. This is the end of the Law; this is the purpose of all good government; this is the teaching of the prophets and the great object of Christ (Isa. xlii. 1—14; Matt. iii. 15; Rom. v. 21). Christ is the "Righteous One;" and of him the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "Christ suffered once the Just for the unjust;" and we see how dear righteousness was to God when "he made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The cross is the measure of God's love of righteousness.

III. **RIGHTEOUSNESS SECURES THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S CREATURES.** Sin brought death into the world, and all our woe. It is by the taking away of sin and the re-establishment of the rule of God in the heart, that happiness is restored (Rom. xiv. 17). The prophets tell with rapture of the good time coming; and note it as the peculiar glory of the new heavens and the new earth, that in them "dwelleth righteousness" (Isa. lxi. 17—25; 2 Pet. iii. 13, 14).

Here is a test: Do we love as God loves? "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (1 John iii. 5—10).—W. F.

Vers. 1—7.—*Faith's antidote to fear.* This psalm is referred by some to the early struggles of David against the unrelenting jealousy of Saul; by others to the rebellion of Absalom; by others to the general conflict ever waging between the good and the evil powers. The subject of it is "Confidence in the Lord, and his protection even against the mightiest force of the wicked." The two leading ideas are the doctrine of David's friends, and David's own doctrine.

I. **SAFETY IN DANGER COULD BE FOUND ONLY IN FLIGHT.** (Vers. 1—3.) This was the temptation with which his friends assailed him—to abandon the righteous cause by flight. The temptation was plausible: 1. *Because his very life was in danger.* If anything less had been threatened—reputation or property—it might have been prudent to remain; but "skin for skin," etc. 2. *The attack upon his life was secret, and not open.* (Ver. 2.) He might resist and conquer an open attack; but what can defend us against cunning plots hatched in secret? 3. *The greatest social disorder prevailed.* (Ver. 3.) "What shall the righteous do?" was their plea with him. "You are powerless if you remain." They were in despair, and thought that flight was his only desperate resource. But David's doctrine was—

II. **THAT SAFETY WAS FOUND BY TRUSTING TO GOD'S PROTECTIVE CARE.** (Vers. 4—7.) 1. *Trust in God enabled him to stand by the righteous cause; by flight he would abandon it to the wicked.* Faith in God gives an unconquerable devotion to the right; flight is unbelief and cowardice. Indolent trust—a trust that does not work and fight in the good cause—is no better than cowardly flight. 2. *He trusted in God's overruling power.* (Vers. 4, 5.) That somehow he would uphold the righteous cause and righteous men; that as long as his throne was in the heavens, they could not be in any

lasting peril, whatever appearances might be. 3. *He trusted in the retributive providence of God.* (Vers. 5, 6.) A providence that dealt with the righteous and the wicked; an inward and an outward retributive providence, which rewards and punishes in both spheres. 4. *Whatever his outward lot, he trusted that he should one day see God's face.* (Ver. 7.) That is safety; that is salvation from all danger and all trouble. The highest salvation is of a spiritual kind, not outward and temporal. To see God's face is to stand firmer than the mountains, and to be richer than all the outward universe.—8.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XII.

ANOTHER Davidical psalm, both according to the title and to the general opinion of critics; said (like Ps. vi.) to be "upon Sheminith"—an expression of uncertain meaning. It consists of a complaint (vers. 1, 2), a menace (vers. 3, 4), and a promise (vers. 5—8). Metrically, it seems to divide itself into four stanzas—the first, second, and fourth, of four lines each; the third, of six lines. There is nothing to mark definitely the time of the composition; but its position in the Psalter, and its general resemblance to the psalms which precede, point to the period of David's residence at the court of Saul.

Ver. 1.—*Help, Lord; rather, Save, Lord, as in the margin* (comp. Ps. xx. 9; xxviii. 9; lx. 5, etc.). For the godly man ceaseth. "Ceaseth," i.e., "out of the land"—either slain or driven into exile. We must make allowance for poetic hyperbole. For the faithful fail from among the children of men (compare, for the sentiment, Micah vii. 2). The writer, for the moment, loses sight of the "remnant"—the little flock—which assuredly remained, and of which he speaks in vers. 5 and 7.

Ver. 2.—*They speak vanity every one with his neighbour; rather, they speak falsehood* (Kay, Cheyne). Contrast the injunction of the apostle (Eph. iv. 25). With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak; literally, *with lips of smoothness, and with a heart and a heart do they speak*. The Authorized Version gives the true meaning (comp. 1 Chron. xii. 33).

Ver. 3.—*The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips.* The complaint having been made, a threat follows (comp. Ps. x. 15; xi. 6; xvii. 13, etc.). The men who flatter with their lips, beguiling and cozening their victims to get them completely into their power, shall be "cut off" from the congregation (see Gen. xvii. 14; Exod. xii. 15, 19; Lev. vii. 20, 27; xvii. 10, etc.). And the tongue that speaketh proud things; literally, *great things*; but proud and lofty boastings are intended (comp. Dan. vii. 8, 20). The

same man sometimes cozens with smooth words, sometimes blusters and talks big.

Ver. 4.—Who have said, *With our tongue will we prevail; or, through our tongues are we powerful*; i.e. whatever we desire we can accomplish through our tongues—by persuasion, or by menaces, or by skill in argument. Success in pleading before courts of law is, perhaps, included. Our lips are our own; literally, *are with us*; i.e. are on our side, are our helpers ("Nobis auxilio et præsto aunt," Michaelis). Who is lord over us? Who, i.e., can interfere with us and impede our action? They do not believe in any righteous Judge and Controller of the world, who can step in to frustrate their plans, upset their designs, and bring them to ruin (see Ps. x. 4, 11; xiv. 1).

Ver. 5.—*For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord.* The ungodly having been threatened, a promise of assistance is made to the righteous whom they oppress. God declares that, in response to the many calls made upon him (Ps. iii. 7; vii. 6; ix. 19; x. 12), he will "now," at last, "arise"—interpose on behalf of the oppressed, and deliver them (comp. Exod. iii. 7, 8). I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. This is a possible meaning; but it is perhaps better to render, with Hengstenberg and Cheyne, "I will place him in the safety for which he sighs," or "pant."

Ver. 6.—*The words of the Lord are pure words.* There is no base alloy in them: therefore they may be trusted. What God promises, he will perform. As silver tried in a furnace of earth; rather, perhaps, *silver assayed in a crucible on earth* (Kay). Purified seven times (comp. Ps. xviii. 30 xix. 8; cxix. 140; Prov. xxx. 5).

Ver. 7.—*Thou shalt keep them, O Lord.* God having promised to set the righteous who are oppressed, in a place of safety (ver. 5), the psalmist is sure that he will keep them and preserve them from the wicked "generation," which has possession of the earth, and bears rule in it, *always*. It is, no doubt, for the greater consolation and encouragement of these unfortunates that he dwells on the subject, and adds his own

assurances to the Divine promise which he has recorded. Man's faith is so weak that, unless promises and assurances are reiterated, they make little impression. Thou shalt preserve them (Hebrew, *him*) from this generation for ever. The "generation" is that of the worldly men in power at the time, of whom we have heard in Pss. iii. 1, 2, 6, 7; iv. 2; v. 4-6, 9, 10; vi. 8; vii. 1, 2, 9, 13-16; x. 2-11, 15; xi. 2, 3, 6. "For ever" means "so long as they live." The substitution of "him" for "them" in this clause is an instance of that generalization by which a whole class is summed up in a single individual—"all men" in

"man," "all good men" in "the righteous" (פִּיִּי), and the like.

Ver. 8.—The wicked walk on every side. This can scarcely have been intended as an independent clause, though grammatically it stands alone. It is best to supply "while" or "though" before "the wicked," as Dr. Kay does, and to translate, *Though (or, while) wicked men march to and fro on all sides; i.e. while they have their way, and control all other men's incomings and outgoings, being free themselves. When the vilest men are exalted; rather, and though villainy (רָמָיָה) exalteth itself among the sons of men.*

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 4.—*Unbridled speech.* "Our lips are our own," etc. If it be true, as we often say, that "actions speak louder than words," it is also true that speech is a kind of action, and that words often speak more than the speaker means to utter. Light, thoughtless words, void of serious meaning, sometimes flash a light into the inmost chamber of the heart; they *could not have been spoken* if kindness, good sense, justice, humility, dwelt and ruled there. Profuse professions are often interpreted by the rule of contrary. When Judas said, "Hail, Master!" he branded himself as a traitor, hypocrite, murderer. The text may not mean that these words are audibly uttered. The Bible speaks often of what men *say in their heart*. The temper and spirit which go with an unbridled tongue are expressed thus: "Our lips are our own."

I. THIS IS A GREAT MISTAKE. Responsibility is not annihilated or lessened by our refusing to acknowledge it. We are responsible for our words as much as for the rest of our life. Our lips are not our own, because we ourselves are not our own (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Ps. c. 3, Revised Version). God "giveth richly all things to enjoy;" but he can *give nothing away*; all is his still, and cannot cease to be his (1 Chron. xxix. 14; Rom. xii. 1). Responsibility to use God's gifts in a way pleasing to him and to his glory increases with the preciousness of the gift. Who can reckon the value of speech? That without which reason would be not only dumb, but blind, deaf, paralyzed—the chief bond of human society, the instrument of truth, instruction, command, persuasion, comfort, converse. All life is "in the power of the tongue" (Prov. xviii. 21). For good or for evil, even a short speech often long outlives the lips that uttered it. Not only "what is written remains." Books and writings decay and perish, while "winged words" fly from land to land, and live on through ages. A great trust is man's gift of speech.

II. A MORE COMMON MISTAKE THAN MAY BE THOUGHT. Thus boldly, coarsely spoken, it is indeed the language of atheism. But think of the enormous amount of idle, unprofitable, unkind, unjust, insincere talk poured forth every day; not to speak of what is wilfully false, impure, or malignant. What does all this mean but utter forgetfulness of responsibility to God for our use of this great gift? Passing sad, too, it is to think how it *runs to waste*; of all the words of counsel, comfort, kindness, prayer, praise, that *might* be spoken, but are not. The dulness of conscience on this point is astonishing. You may meet often with Christians who positively pride themselves on "speaking their mind," no matter at what cost to others. People who would think it unpardonably wicked to strike a hard blow with the fist, think nothing of giving a stab with the tongue, which perhaps years will not heal (Jas. iii. 6).

III. It is not enough that we see the sin of unbridled speech, the reckless impiety of supposing "our lips are our own." Let us take to heart OUR RESPONSIBILITY to our brother man, above all, to our Saviour, for our use of this noble faculty and priceless gift. "The fruit of our lips" (Heb. xiii. 15) may be a "sacrifice" in other ways as well as praise. Remember our Lord's warning (Matt. xii. 36, 37). Meditate on what we owe to the words of those who have taught, counselled, cheered, and helped

us; to the words of inspired men; above all, to the words of the Lord Jesus. "A word spoken in season, how good is it!" A kind word, a faithful rebuke, an honest avowal of faith and conviction, a manly protest against impure or ill-natured speech, may be the turning-point for good of some young life. "Let your speech be always with grace" (Col. iv. 6; Eph. iv. 29, 30, where note the remarkable reference to the Holy Spirit; Ps. xix. 14).

Ver. 6.—*The preciousness of the Word.* "The words of the Lord," etc. Thus the Bible bears witness to itself. We read often in Scripture of "the word of the Lord"—not so often of "the words" of the Lord. By "the Word of the Lord" is meant sometimes a particular command, promise, or prediction; but frequently—and usually in the New Testament—the substance or sum-total of Divine truth (Ps. cxix. 9, *e.g.*). But this phrase, "the words of the Lord," calls attention to the actual utterances in which this truth is recorded for us. So our Lord distinguishes (John viii. 43) between his "speech," the particular form or method of his teaching, and his "Word," his doctrine.

I. THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES. "The words of the Lord." We must guard against such narrow, mechanical views of inspiration as would confine it to the Hebrew and Greek words in which it was written, so that one who reads a good translation would not have "the words of the Lord." "The meaning of Scripture," says Tyndale, "is Scripture." Inspiration is the Holy Spirit working *in* men and *by* men—not as machines, but as living, reasonable beings. We ought not to speak of "the human element" and "the Divine element" as separable or hostile. A great picture is but paint and canvas, informed, vivified by the thought and genius of the artist. You cannot say, "This part is paint, and that part is genius." So in the Bible. "Men of God spake"—there is the human element—"as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"—there is the Divine (comp. 2 Tim. iii. 16, where, had the Revisers followed the analogy of their own rendering in 2 Tim. iv. 4, they would have retained the rendering they have transferred to the margin).

II. ITS TRIED AND PROVED TRUTH. The similitude is drawn from precious metal, whose worth and purity have been proved in the furnace, which separated the dross from the pure ore. The idea is not that we are to distinguish, in Scripture, dross from gold and silver, but that God has done so. He gives us not rough ore, but pure metal. But we may apply the image to the tests to which the Bible has been and daily is submitted. 1. The *experience* of those who have trusted it and gone by it. Those who have done this longest, most practically, with fullest faith, are the very persons most convinced of the truth and worth of the Bible. 2. *Hostile criticism.* For the last hundred years this has been especially fierce, learned, elaborate, determined, skilful. Had the Word not been pure gold, it must have perished in this fierce furnace. The result has been to shed a flood of light on the letter of Scripture, and to bring to light a mass of new and powerful evidence, bearing witness to its truth and genuineness. It stands *both* tests (1 Pet. i. 23—25).

III. ITS PRECIOUSNESS. It is worth all the care and trouble God has bestowed, by his providence and inspiration, on its composition and preservation; all the help and illumination which the Holy Spirit continually grants to those who read it with faith and earnest prayer; all the study given to it by friends and foes (Pss. cxix. 72; xix. 20).

CONCLUSION. Is it precious to *you*? Is this the witness of your own experience? If not, it must be because you have not really tried it.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Hard times.* This psalm has no indication of the time in which it was written.<sup>1</sup> At whatever time, however, it may have been penned, there is no doubt about the general features of the age here represented. It was one in which good men were becoming more and more rare, in which the wicked abounded, and took occasion from the numerical inferiority of the righteous to indulge in haughty and vain talk against them and against God. The psalmist looks with concern and distress upon this state

<sup>1</sup> See the introduction hereto in 'The Cambridge Bible.'

of things, and sends up a piercing cry to God to arise and make his glory known. We have in the psalm three lines of thought—fierce trials; fervent prayer; faithful promise.

**I. FIERCE TRIALS.** They are not personal ones merely; they are such as would be felt mainly by those of God's people who, possessed of a holy yearning for the prosperity of his cause and the honour of his Name, grieved more acutely over the degeneracy of their age than over any private or family sorrow. There were six features of society at the time when this psalm was written. 1. The paucity of good and faithful men<sup>1</sup> (ver. 2). 2. Wicked men being in power (ver. 8). 3. The righteous being oppressed (ver. 6). 4. Falsehood, *i.e.* faithlessness.<sup>2</sup> 5. Pride. 6. Vain-glorious boasting and self-assertion. When wickedness gets the upper hand in these ways, times are hard indeed for good and faithful men. In such times Elijah, Jeremiah, and others lived, and wept, and moaned, and prayed. Many a prophet of the Lord has had to look upon such a state of things, when all day long he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people. Note: 1. This description of the degeneracy of the writer's age is not a Divine record of the state of the world as a whole. The psalm is made up of words of man to God, not of words of God to man. 2. Still less is the psalm to be regarded as stating or implying that the world as a whole is always getting worse and worse. Let the student take the psalm simply for what it professes to be—a believer's moan over the corruptions of his age—and he will find it far more richly helpful and suggestive than on any forced hypothesis. 3. The special ills of any age may well press on the heart of a believer; yea, they will do so, if a becoming Christian public spirit is cherished by him. 4. There are times when Christian men have to sigh and cry, owing to the abominations of the social life around them; and when Faber's touching words are true—

“He hides himself so wondrously,  
As if there were no God;  
He is least seen when all the powers  
Of ill are most abroad.”

5. And trials not less severe are felt when there is a widespread defection from the faith once delivered to the saints, and when men are calling for a “religion without God;” and are even, in some cases, forsaking Christianity for Mohammedanism or Buddhism. Through such trials believers are passing now (A.D. 1894). At such times they must resort to—

**II. FERVENT PRAYER.** The psalmist gives expression to the conviction that nothing but the immediate and powerful interposition of God will meet the crisis<sup>3</sup> (cf. Isa. lxiv. 1). In what way this Divine aid shall be vouchsafed it is not for the praying man to say. He must leave that with God, content to have laid the case before him. The answer may come in the form of terrible providential judgments, or in the sending forth of a new band of powerful witnesses to contend with the adversaries, or in a widespread work of grace and of spiritual quickening power. All these methods are hinted at in Scripture, and witnessed to by the history of the Church. Note: Such prayers as this agonizing “Help, Lord!” while they are the outcome of intense concern, are yet not cries of hopeless despair. True, our help is *only* in God; but *it is there*, and an all-sufficient help it will prove to be—as to time, method, measure, and effect. In every age the saints of God have thus betaken themselves to him, and never in vain. For ever have they proved the—

**III. FAITHFUL PROMISE.** 1. The contents of the promise are given in ver. 5. 2. The value of the promise, as proved and tried, is specified in ver. 6. There is not an atom of dross in any of the promises of God—all are pure gold. 3. Having these promises, the believer can calmly declare the issue in the full assurance of faith. (1) The false men and proud boasters shall be cut off (ver. 3). (2) The Divine preserving guard will keep the righteous from being sucked into the vortex of corruption (ver. 7). Note: The Christian teacher will feel bound to remember that in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the gift of the Spirit, and in all the resulting activities of the Christian Church, the Lord has put forces in operation for the rectification of

<sup>1</sup> Cheyne has some helpful words on the precise meaning of the terms in this first verse.

<sup>2</sup> See Fausset's ‘Studies on the Psalms,’ lect. viii. p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> See a powerful sermon by the late Dr. Enoch Mellor, on Ps. cxix. 126.

social wrongs, more effective than any of which the psalmist dreamt, and that these forces have only to be given time to work, and "all things will become new." The disclosures to this effect in the Book of the Apocalypse are an abiding source of comfort to God's people in the worst of times.—C.

**Vers. 1—8.—Christian growth.** I. TROUBLE MOVES MEN TO PRAYER. (Ver. 1.) As the child instinctively cries to its father, so we cry to God. Society may wax worse and worse. The righteous may fall out of the land. It is hard to serve alone. Falsehood and lust prevail. There are fears on every side. In God alone is our help found.

II. PRAYER STRENGTHENS FAITH. (Vers. 3, 4.) There is some relief in telling our griefs. Further, we are cheered by the assurance of God's love. He must ever be on the side of truth and right. More particularly we are encouraged by the record of God's mighty works, and his promises to stand by his people. In communing with God, and casting our cares upon him who careth for us, our faith gains force and grows in ardour and activity.

III. FAITH INSPIRES HOPE. (Vers. 5, 6.) We remember God's word, on which he hath caused us to place our hope. God's promises are good, for he is love; they are certain, for he is faithful; they are sure of accomplishment, for he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. Thus our hearts are revived. There may be delay, but not denial. There may be silence long, but never refusal. God has his own time and his own way.

IV. HOPE CULMINATES IN ASSURANCE. (Vers. 7, 8.) Light arises. The sky becomes brighter and brighter. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" All things are working to a perfect end. The prosperity of the wicked is vanity, and his triumph endureth but for a little while. The end of the righteous is peace. "Thou shalt preserve them for ever."—W. F.

**Vers. 1—8.—Lamentation over the growing corruption of the nation.** "The psalmist is appalled by the rottenness of society around him; unscrupulous ambition appears to rule supreme; truth is scorned as folly, and the god of lies is enthroned in the national heart. But God had not left himself without a witness." Prophets and seers had already declared the Divine word of promise, that the righteous cause should be upheld and vindicated.

I. A DARK PICTURE OF DEPRAVED SOCIETY. 1. *There were few conspicuous for righteousness.* (Ver. 1.) Not that they had entirely ceased, but that they were fewer than they used to be. "Say not that the former times were better than these." Guard against this natural tendency—natural especially to men who are growing old. 2. *The prevalence of unscrupulous falsehood.* (Ver. 2.) Lies and flattery and deceit. A disregard for truth was widely spread, one of the aims most destructive of social life. This spirit of falsehood infested their most intimate relations—"every one with his neighbour"—and would corrupt at last even the family relations. 3. *They worshipped that which won for them their evil success.* (Vers. 3, 4.) Lying and deceit—the evil power of the tongue—prevailing for the time, made them feel that they were their own lords, that there was no higher power above them.

II. THE PSALMIST CONSOLES HIMSELF WITH THE DIVINE PROMISE OF PROTECTION. (Ver. 5.) 1. *That promise inspires him to pray for its fulfilment.* (Vers. 1—3.) All true prayer bases itself on the Divine promise. "If we ask according to his will, we know that God heareth us." 2. *The Divine promise is pure from the alloy that corrupts the words of men.* (Ver. 6.) It has no admixture of flattery and deceit as the words of men have. "God cannot lie." 3. *That promise guarantees them protection, even when wickedness walks in high places.* (Vers. 7, 8.) Wickedness is most alluring when in high places; but if God helps us to see that it is wickedness, and keeps our consciences clear and active, we are effectually protected from it. The defence against wickedness must be a Divine work *within* us as well as without us.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM XIII.

THE writer—again, according to the title, David—is reduced almost to utter despair. He has undergone lengthened persecution—the Divine countenance has been turned away from him (ver. 1); it seems to him that God has altogether forgotten him; he is in extreme perplexity and distress (ver. 2), and raises the cry—so often raised by sufferers (Job xix. 2; Psa. vi. 3; xxxv. 7; lxxix. 5; xciv. 3, 4; Hab. i. 2; Rev. vi. 10)—“How long?” This cry he repeats four times (vers. 1, 2). He does not, however, *quite* despair. In ver. 3 he passes from protest to prayer; and in vers. 5, 6 he proceeds from prayer to praise, having (apparently) through his prayer received an internal assurance of God’s help. The tone suits the time when he was “hunted in the mountains” by Saul (1 Sam. xxvi. 20).

Ver. 1.—How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord! for ever? God cannot forget, but man often feels as if he were forgotten of him (comp. Psa. xlii. 9; xlv. 24; Lam. v. 20). David seems to have feared that God had forgotten him “for ever.” How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? (comp. Psa. xxx. 7; Isa. i. 15; Ezek. xxxix. 29). The “light of God’s countenance” shining on us is the greatest blessing that we know (see Psa. iv. 6; xxxi. 18; xlv. 4; lxvii. 1; lxxx. 3, 7, etc.). When it is withdrawn, and he “hides his face,” we naturally sink into despair.

Ver. 2.—How long shall I take counsel in my soul? or, *How long shall I arrange plans?* (Kay). Tossing on a sea of doubt and perplexity, David forms plan after plan, but to no purpose. He seeks to find a way of escape from his difficulties, but cannot discover one. Having sorrow in my heart daily; or, *all the day*. It is, perhaps, implied that the plans are formed and thought over at night. How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? A special enemy is once more glanced at. The allusion seems to be to Saul (comp. Psa. vii. 2, 5, 11–16; viii. 2; ix. 6, 16; x. 2–11, 15; xi. 5).

Ver. 3.—Consider and hear me, O Lord my God (comp. Psa. v. 1; ix. 13; cxli. 1, etc.).

David will not allow himself to be “forgotten;” he will recall himself to God’s remembrance. “Consider—hear me,” he says, “O Lord my God;” still “*my God*,” although thou hast forgotten me, and therefore bound to “hear me.” Lighten mine eyes. Not so much “enlighten me spiritually,” as “cheer me up; put brightness into my eyes; revive me” (comp. Ezra ix. 8, “Grace hath been showed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape . . . that our God may *lighten our eyes*, and give us a little reviving”). Lest I sleep the sleep of death; literally, *lest I sleep death*. Death is compared to a sleep by Job (xiv. 12), Jeremiah (li. 39, 57), Daniel (xii. 2), and here by David, in the Old Testament; and by our Lord (John xi. 11–13) and St. Paul in the New (1 Cor. xi. 30; xv. 51; 1 Thess. iv. 14, 15). The external resemblance of a corpse to a sleeping person was the root of the metaphor, and we shall do wrong to conclude from its employment anything with respect to the psalmist’s views concerning the real nature of death.

Ver. 4.—Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him. The triumph of David’s enemy over him, whether he were Saul or any one else, even the ideal wicked man, would be the triumph of evil over good, of those who had cast God behind their back over those who faithfully served him, of irreligion over piety. He could therefore appeal to God—not in his own personal interest, but in the interest of truth and right, and the general good of mankind—to prevent his enemy’s triumph. And those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. There would be a general rejoicing on the part of all his foes, if his arch-enemy succeeded in seriously injuring him.

Ver. 5.—But I have trusted (or, *I trust*) in thy mercy. I know, *i.e.*, that thou wilt not suffer me to be overcome by my enemy. Thou wilt save me; and therefore my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation, whereof I entertain no doubt.

Ver. 6.—I will sing unto the Lord. I will exchange my cry of despair, “How long?” (vers. 1, 2), for a joyful song of thanksgiving; because already I am cheered, I am revived—he (*i.e.* the Lord) hath dealt bountifully with me. And this mental revival is an assurance of deliverance to come.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 6.—*Despair turned to thankfulness.* “How long,” etc.? “I will sing,” etc. The last verse of this tender and beautiful little psalm contains the reply to the first.

Despondency is turned into thankfulness; the prayer of anguish into the song of praise. Its music, beginning with a plaintive, pathetic minor, passes through a solemn strain of pleading prayer into the triumphant major of full-voiced faith and joy. This is the music to which many a Christian life is set. It is not a strictly prophetic psalm; but we may well suppose that it is one of those in which the "Man of sorrows" read his own experience.

I. DAVID'S PATHETIC APPEAL. "How long," etc.? Two questions run into one. It had endured so long, he felt as if it must go on for ever. The flame of hope flickered in the socket. Total darkness seemed at hand. Did David *really think* God had forgotten him? No; but he *felt* as if it were so. "Not that faith in God's promises was dead in his soul, or that he no longer relied on his grace; but that, when troubles long press upon us, and no token of Divine help appears, this thought cannot fail to thrust itself into our mind, 'God has forgotten me'" (Calvin). Causes of his despondency. 1. The long continuance of his trouble. 2. Prayer seeming to remain unanswered. 3. His foes' exaltation. 4. Fear lest he should die before deliverance came (see 1 Sam. xxvii. 1).

II. DAVID'S JOYFUL THANKSGIVING. "I will sing," etc. Light suddenly breaks out of darkness. What is the secret of this surprising change? Have his troubles ceased? Not at all. But that which made their worst bitterness is gone—his doubt of God's goodness and truth. In the very act of prayer, his mind is led out of himself, and faith rekindled. "The grace of God, which is hid from carnal apprehension, is grasped by faith" (Calvin). Despair said, "Faith is an illusion. I have trusted and am forsaken." Faith answers, "God is faithful. I have trusted; therefore I cannot be forsaken."

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-6.—*Sorrow and trust; sighing and song.* This is one of those numerous psalms which come under the first division specified in our introductory homily. It belongs to those which give us an insight into the religious experiences of an Old Testament saint—probably David—but it matters not whose they were. For they are a precise reflection of the alternations of spiritual mood through which many a sorrowful believer since then has passed; yea, through the like of which many of our readers may be passing now. We can never be too thankful for such psalms as these, showing us, as they do, not so much the objectivities of Divine revelation, as the subjectivities of inward experience. Not that we are bound, in our experience, to find that which corresponds to every phase. By no means. Experienced nurses say that no two babes ever cried exactly alike; and certainly no two children of God ever went through *precisely* the same experience. Still, the course pursued by the early believers is a fine lesson-book for modern ones. We shall find our study of this psalm suggestive of much in the experience of believers and in the dealings of God with them.

I. HERE ARE REMARKABLE ALTERNATIONS OF MOOD AND EMOTION.<sup>1</sup> There are seven notes in music; there are seven colours in light. If there are seven stages in religious emotion, surely this psalm notes them all. We have a believer: 1. *Thinking himself shut off from God.* "How long wilt thou forget me . . . hide thy face from me?" It does not follow that God had hidden his face; and assuredly he had not forgotten the troubled one. Had it been so, the afflicted one had not survived to offer this prayer. Note: It is not in the midst of sore anguish that we can rightly gauge the mind of God towards us. We may be the objects of tenderest compassion even when our sun seems to be eclipsed. 2. *Fearing his adversaries.* (See ver. 4.) He was evidently surrounded by those who lay in wait for him. He could have faced them boldly had it not been for the hiding of God's face. But that made him tremble, and no wonder. 3. *Sorrowfully musing.* (Ver. 2.) What a tumult of agitation was he now passing through! And what a bewildered and bewildering host of troublous thoughts and queries seize the mind at such times as these! 4. *Sinking under the pressure.* (Ver. 3.) The phrase indicates that the psalmist was at the very verge of despair. "Courage

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Perowne has a most helpful note on this psalm. The Rev. R. A. Fausset's study thereon is very valuable (lect. v. p. 34).



almost gone." So that his spirit is failing or his bodily frame is giving way. The writer may mean either or both.<sup>1</sup> 5. *Trusting.* (Ver. 5.) "The darkest hour is just before the dawn." This reaches its deepest and bitterest; and then—*trust* prevents absolute despair. The renewed heart clings to God, even in the dark. And he to whom our spirit thus clings will appear for us at the right time, and in his own wonder-working way. 6. *Trust leads to prayer.* The whole psalm is a prayer. One of the greatest blessings in life is to have a friend who will *never* misunderstand us; and by whom all our unintelligible and contradictory words will be pitied, and not blamed; who will bury our follies in his own love. But there is only *One* in whom all this exists to perfection—even our God. He never misinterprets the language of broken hearts and bewildered souls—never! We may always tell him exactly what we feel, *as we feel it*; or, if words will not come, then "our groaning" is not hid from him. He will answer us, not according to our imperfection, but will do exceeding abundantly for us "above all that we can ask or think." The fourth verse may not and does not give us the highest style of pleading. But it indicates the burden on the heart. And whatsoever is a burden on a child's heart is to the Father an object of loving concern, and may be rolled over on to God (Pss. lv. 22; cxlii. 1-7). 7. *Deliverance comes in answer to prayer.* And thus it ever will be. So that he who *moans* at the beginning of prayer may *sing* at the end of it. "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." Thus does this psalm run through the various shades or stages of emotion. Having gone down to the depths of the valley of anguish, the writer comes at length to stand on the heights of the mount of praise!

II. SUCH A REHEARSAL OF EXPERIENCE THROWS MUCH LIGHT ON THE SECRET DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," says the psalmist elsewhere (Ps. xxv. 14). And this thirteenth psalm lets us into it. It teaches us: 1. *That the child of God is the object of the Father's tenderest pity and love*, even at the moment of tumultuous anguish and deep darkness of soul. The sun shines just as brightly on us, even when a film over the eyes obscures our sight of it. Saints are never nearer or dearer to the heart of God than when they are in trouble. 2. *God graciously sanctifies the anguish*, and makes it the means of quickening to intenser devotion. It is not when all is calm that prayer is at its best. Ah, no! It is when we are stunned, startled, half-paralyzed by some dreadful and unexpected trial, that we pray the most earnestly. It is quite possible that at such times words may fail; but God reads deep meaning in the tear, and hears heavenly eloquence in the sighs of those that seek him. 3. *The anguish will be removed in God's own time.* When the trial sent us has secured its needed end in the quickening of devotion, the strengthening of faith, and the improvement of the whole life, then will the pressure be taken off. Nor ought we to desire it otherwise. It is far more important to have our afflictions sanctified than to have them removed. 4. *By the very trials through which we have passed we shall have learnt to be comforters of others.* If the psalmist had known that the written experience of his sorrows and his songs would have gone down to hundreds of generations, to comfort sorrowing souls in all time, he would have been thankful for his trouble, sharp as it was. Note: (1) It is only those who have gone through trouble that can effectually be comforters of others (2 Cor. i. 6; cf. Heb. ii. 18). (2) It is not to be supposed that *merely* because we have sorrow at one moment we shall have joy in the future. Only God's mourners can expect God's comforts. Matt. v. 4 is for those named in Matt. v. 3. The vast difference pointed out in Isa. l. 10, 11 should be reverently and anxiously pondered. (3) It is only the renewed soul that can possibly thus trust, pray, and plead, when in the midst of anguish. The supreme concern of each is to accept peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ; to have sin forgiven, and the soul renewed. He who has first cast his burden of sin and guilt on an atoning Saviour, and who is being renewed by the Holy Ghost, may come every day and cast any care, and all his care, upon his Father, God. (4) It is infinitely better to be in the depth of the valley of sorrow, as a good man, and to let our God lead us up to the height of joy, than, as a godless man, to be at the height of merriment and laughter for a while, only to sink to the depths of despair.—C.

<sup>1</sup> We cannot at all accept Dr. Cheyne's view of the phrase—"Lest I sleep the sleep of death." Bishop Perowne is much more to the point.

**Vers. 1—6.—From despondency to peace.** The soul may pass quickly from one emotion to another—from fear to hope, from the gloom of despondency to the brightness of peace. Such a change finds expression in this psalm.

**I. THE CRY.** (Vers. 1, 2.) Under the pressure of affliction, hard thoughts of God arise. But if there be complaint of God, it is to be observed that the complaint is carried to God. Instead of sullen murmuring, there is meek confession. Instead of bitter resentment, there is affectionate remonstrance. There is not only the "taking counsel with his own soul," which left him in deeper "sorrow," but there is the going out of himself, to cast his cares upon God, whereby he finds relief.

**II. THE APPEAL.** (Vers. 3, 4.) Led by the Spirit, the child of God quickly turns his cry of pain into a prayer for spiritual help. The shadows were deepening; night, with its sleep of death, seemed near; but God was able to bring deliverance. Hence the urgent and passionate appeal. So when we are in peril let us cry to God. Our extremity is his opportunity. Our time of need is his time of mercy.

**III. THE TESTIMONY.** (Vers. 5, 6.) Help seems to have come to the psalmist as to Daniel; while he was yet "speaking in prayer" (Dan. ix. 20, 21). So it often is. God is more ready to hear than we are to ask. "He waiteth to be gracious." 1. *The peace given is real.* There may still be storm without, but there is calm within. 2. *The confidence is comforting.* Imagination no longer works by fear, but by hope, and brightens all the future. The soul that seemed about to enter the dark valley of the shadow of death, with the terrible fear that God was departed, now rejoices in the sunshine of God's presence (Micah vii. 9; Zech. xiv. 7).—W. F.

**Ver. 1.—God's averted face.** The hiding of God's face is a sore trial to his people. If they did not love him, they could bear it; but as they love him so much, it is a great affliction. It may be said of such trials, that they are still harder to bear under the gospel. For the very fact that God once dwelt with men—going in and out among them as one of themselves, loving them, and doing them good—makes the mystery of his silence now the deeper, and our distress the greater. "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled" (Ps. xxx. 7; cf. Job xiii. 24). 1. This conduct on the part of our Lord seems *alien to his nature*. We expect a friend to show himself friendly. We blame a physician if he comes not at once when urgently summoned. We would call a father or mother unfeeling and unnatural who shut their ears to the cries of their own child. 2. Then this silence of our Lord seems *contrary to his action when he was in the world*. He was then easy of access, and ready to help. True, he at first refused the Syro-phenician; but he gave her all she asked in the end. True, he delayed coming to Bethany; but he did come, in his own time, and turned the house of mourning into a home of joy. 3. Then, again, we have our Lord's *teaching and promises*. We remember what is said, that we should "not hide ourselves from our own flesh" (Isa. lviii. 7); how we are taught to show kindness to our enemies, and even to have pity on the very brutes (Deut. xxii. 1—4; Matt. xii. 12); and "how much is a man better than a sheep!" We think also of the parables of Lazarus, and of the man who fell among thieves, and our hearts are in perplexity. "I weep . . . because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me" (Lam. i. 16). Besides, we remember our Lord's promises. It cannot be that he does not know; or that he lacks the power; or that his love is waxed cold. Why, then, does he let us lie at his gate; or leave us half-dead by the wayside; or fail to come to us when we are "comfortless"? These and such-like thoughts rise and trouble us. Our hearts are like a tree, with its many branches, tossed and torn by the storm. But in the multitude of our thoughts within us, there are comforts still left to us. First, Christ is not changed. Next, he knows all that has come to us, and has pity. Then, he has his own gracious purposes in our afflictions. They are necessary for our good (Isa. lix. 2; Hos. v. 15). Then we should not count such trials as strange, as we are under a spiritual dispensation. Christ is really with us still, in his Word and Spirit and the ministry of his people. He even comes at times to us, when we know him not (Matt. xxv. 38). Then we should remember that he has, for a season, put a restraint upon himself. We may say, like Martha, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." And this is true. But our Lord could not be here with us, as in the days of his flesh, and at the same time carry out his plans of discipline and training under the

Spirit. Last of all, let us remember that these trials are temporary. They may end here. They will certainly end hereafter (Isa. liv. 7; Ezra xxxix. 23—29). Our Lord knew himself the pain of desertion; and he longs to have us with him, where there shall be no more hidings of his face, or crying, or tears. Let us, therefore, take the counsel of Elihu, "Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him" (Job xxxv. 14; cf. Isa. viii. 17).—W. F.

Vers. 1—6.—*The agony of desertion.* Probably a psalm of David, composed at the time of Saul's persecution. It expresses the agony of a mind that thinks itself deserted of God, in danger of death, and threatened by a formidable enemy. It is a long and weary struggle; and, wrestling with his despair, he breaks into a pitiful prayer, which is succeeded by the exercise of a returning faith.

I. DESPAIR. (Vers. 1, 2.) 1. *He thinks he is for ever forsaken of God.* The emphasis lies on the "for ever." How much this implies of delight in the former friendship of God! Compare Christ's cry on the cross. 2. *Fruitless efforts of the mind to escape from its position.* "Taking counsel," etc. These issue only in continued sorrow of heart. One plan after another is revolved and rejected; one solution after another of his difficulties is thought of, and then dismissed; and he is left in despair. He is helpless and hopeless. 3. *Personal danger from some enemy.* (Ver. 2.) Probably Saul. Internal and external causes combined to make him profoundly miserable.

II. BUT EVEN IN HIS DESPAIR HE PRAYS. 1. *Look upon me* (equivalent to "consider"). And do not continue to hide thy face. 2. *Hear and succour* (equivalent to "answer me"). And do not forget me for ever. This is hope out of despair—the single ray of light that shot into his deep darkness. There is something left for each of us. 3. *Give a renewed power of life* (equivalent to "lighten mine eyes"). Anxiety and sorrow had induced physical depression, and he apprehended that he would sink into the sleep of death. "Lighten mine eyes" here means, "Send back the tide of life, that my eyes may again be lit with life, and the deathlike drowsiness dispelled."

III. PRAYER LEADS HIM BACK INTO TRUST. 1. *He remembers the object of his former trust.* "In thy loving-kindness have I trusted." Not in his personal merits, nor only in the justice of his cause. Faith grasps the unseen as the ground of its trust. 2. *He recalls the reasons of that trust.* "Thy salvation," which I have experienced in former times. God's bountiful dealing with him. That had been the rule of the Divine conduct towards him. Faith draws hope out of experience.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XIV.

It has been strongly argued, from the mention of the "captivity" of God's people in ver. 7, that this psalm was written during the sojourn in Babylon, and therefore not by David (De Wette). But "captivity" is often used metaphorically in Scripture (Job xlii. 10; Ezek. xvi. 53; Rom. vii. 23; 2 Cor. x. 5; Eph. iv. 8, etc.); and to "return to the captivity"—which is the expression used in ver. 7—is simply to visit and relieve those who are oppressed. There is nothing, therefore, to prevent the psalm from being David's, as it is said to be in the title. With respect to the time in David's life whereto it is to be referred, Dr Kay's conjecture, which assigns it to the period of the flight from Absalom, may be accepted.

The psalm is composed of two stanzas, one setting forth the wickedness of the ungodly (vers. 1—3), the other announcing their coming discomfiture, and the relief and consequent joy of the oppressed (vers. 4—7). (On the resemblance and differences between this psalm and Ps. liii., see the comment on Ps. liii.)

Ver. 1.—The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. An atheism is here depicted which goes beyond even that of Ps. x. There the existence of God was not so much denied as his providence. Here his existence is not only denied, but denied in the very depths of the man's heart. He has contrived to convince himself of what he so much wishes. The psalmist regards such a state of mind as indicative of that utter perversity and folly which is implied in the term *nabal* (נָבָל). They are oor-

rupt; literally, *they have corrupted themselves* (comp. Gen. vi. 12; Judg. ii. 19). Their atheism is accompanied by deep moral corruption. We have no right to say that this is always so; but the tendency of atheism to relax moral restraints is indisputable. They have done abominable works (comp. vers. 3 and 4). There is none that doeth good; *i.e.* none among them. The psalmist does not intend his words to apply to the whole human race. He has in his mind a "righteous generation" (ver. 5), "God's people" (ver. 4), whom he sets over against the wicked, both in this psalm and elsewhere universally (see Ps. i. 1—3; ii. 12; iii. 8; iv. 3, etc.).

Ver. 2.—The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men. Corruption having reached such a height as it had, God is represented as looking down from heaven with a special object—to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. To see, *i.e.*, if among the crowd of the "abominable" doers spoken of in ver. 1 there were any of a better spirit, and possessed of understanding, and willing to seek after God. But it was in vain. The result of his scrutiny appears in the next verse.

Ver. 3.—They are all gone aside. *Hacól* (חָצֵל), "the totality"—one and all of which had turned aside, like the Israelites at Sinai (Exod. xxxii. 8); they had quitted the way of righteousness, and turned to wicked courses. The expression "denotes a general—all but universal—corruption" ('Speaker's Commentary'). They are all together become filthy; literally, *sour, rancid*—like milk that has turned, or butter that has become bad. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. St. Paul's application of this passage (Rom. iii. 10—12), to prove that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (ver. 23), goes beyond the intention of the psalmist.

Ver. 4.—Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? The exclamation is put in the mouth of God. Can it be possible that none of these evil-doers is aware of the results of evil-doing? Do they think to escape Divine retribution? The "wonder expresses the magnitude of their folly" (Hengstenberg). Who eat up my people as they eat bread. Reducing men to poverty, robbing them, and devouring their substance, is called, in Scripture, devouring the men themselves (see Prov. xxx. 14; Isa. iii. 14; Micah iii. 3). Those who are

plundered and despoiled are compared to "bread" in Numb. xiv. 2. The Homeric *δημοβόρος βασιλεύς*, adduced by Dr. Kay, is an instance of the same metaphor. And call not upon the Lord. This might have seemed scarcely to need mention, since "how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" (Rom. x. 14). But it connects them definitely with the atheists of ver. 1.

Ver. 5.—There were they in great fear. "There"—in the midst of their evil-doing, while they are devouring God's people—a sudden terror seizes on them. Ps. liii. 5 adds, "Where no fear was," which seems to imply a panic terror, like that which seized the Syrians when they were besieging Samaria (2 Kings vii. 6, 7). For God is in the generation of the righteous. God's people cannot be attacked without provoking him; they are in him, and he in them; he will assuredly come to their relief.

Ver. 6.—Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his Refuge. The sense is obscure. Some translate, "Ye may shame the counsel of the poor (*i.e.* put it to shame, baffle it); but in vain; for the poor have a sure Refuge," and the ultimate triumph will belong to them. Others, "Ye pour contempt on the poor man's counsel," or "resolve," because "the Lord is his Refuge;" *i.e.* ye condemn it, and deride it, just because it rests wholly on a belief in God, which you regard as folly (see ver. 1).

Ver. 7.—Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! The salvation of the "righteous generation" (ver. 5), the "true Israel," is sure to come. Oh that it were come already! It will proceed "out of Zion," since God's Name is set there. The ark of the covenant had been already set up in the place which it was thenceforth to occupy (see 2 Sam. vi. 12—17). David's reign in Jerusalem is begun. When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people; either, when the Lord turneth the ill fortune of his people, or, when the Lord returneth to the captivity of his people; *i.e.* when he no longer turns away from their sufferings and afflictions, but turns towards them, and lifts up the light of his countenance upon them, then Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad. (For the union of these two names, see Ps. lxxviii. 21, 71; cv. 23; cxxxv. 4, etc.) God's people shall celebrate their deliverance with a psalm of thanksgiving.

#### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The fool's creed, and its consequences.* "The fool hath said," etc. This is very plain speaking. Bible writers are not wont to wrap their meaning in soft phrases. They utter truth in words clear as sunbeams, keen as lightning. This word "fool"

refers to character rather than understanding. The psalmist has in his eye one blinded by worldliness or besotted with vice, who can see no charm in virtue, no beauty in holiness, no loveliness, grandeur, attractiveness, in Divine truth. "The fool's creed," as it has been called, is not the conclusion of his reason, but the practical language of a lawless, selfish life. On this very account it is objected that this is not only a harsh, but an unjust judgment, if it be taken to mean that none but fools say, "There is no God." Wise men, it is affirmed, are to be found saying the same thing.

I. THIS CLAIM REQUIRES OUR CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. For our first duty is to be just. An unjust Christian is a living contradiction. 1. Now, it is at all events clear that any one who should affirm positively, as a truth men may be certain of, that "there is no God," would be guilty of stupendous folly. Whether the evidence that God exists be adequate and convincing or no, there can be no contrary evidence. To be entitled to assert that God does *not* exist, a man must possess at least one attribute of Deity—omniscience. 2. Therefore thoughtful sceptics in our own day do not venture on this tremendous assertion. They disclaim the name "atheists," and call themselves "agnostics;" *q.d.* persons who do not pretend to assert or deny the Divine existence, but simply maintain that the Cause of all things is altogether unknown and unknowable. Let us be honest, and not confuse things with a mist of words. *Practically*, agnosticism and atheism (differ as they may philosophically) come to the same result. "The *ungodly*," in Scripture language, are not merely the openly vicious or violently wicked; they are those who do not fear, love, trust, obey God; who do not *know* God (1 John iv. 8). *Practically*, therefore, the agnostic, who may be wise in all worldly wisdom; cultured, virtuous, benevolent; takes sides in the great warfare and journey of life, with the fool. If the agnostic be right, Moses, David, Isaiah, and all the ancient prophets; St. Paul, St. John, and all the apostles; St. Stephen and all the martyrs; with the greatest champions of justice and benevolence in all ages,—followed cunningly devised fables; Jesus Christ founded his religion and his Church on an illusion. The fool has in his blindness stumbled on the truth hid from the best and wisest in all ages: "There is no God!"

II. Supposing this ghastly denial to be, not the fool's, but the wise man's creed—the nearest approach to truth we can make on the greatest of all questions: let us reflect a little on the *consequences*. Truth, it may be said, is truth, whatever be the consequences. That is so. But consequences may be a test of truth. Unless truth leads to happiness and goodness, life is aimless wandering, and human nature a lie. 1. "No God!" *Then Divine providence is a fiction*. No wise plan or gracious purpose lives through each life, or through the history of the race. No eye watches over us with unsleeping care. No hand is on the helm of human affairs. We thought that the steps of a good man were ordered by the Lord; that he was the Ruler of nations, King of kings, and Friend of the widow and fatherless. These ideas must be given up as idle dreams. Law—a meaningless word, if there be no Supreme Will or Organizing Mind; and chance—the jumble of misconnected causes—rule all. 2. "No God!" *Then prayer must be an illusion*. We thought that when the poor man cried, the Lord heard him; that when we cast our care on him, he cared for us; that it was as easy for him to grant his children's requests, without any interference with the laws of his universe, as for a mother to give her child bread. All the laws of the universe went to the making of the loaf—not to *disable*, but to *enable* her to grant her child's prayer. If there be no God, or none we can know, prayer is of all delusions the most vain. 3. "No God!" *Then there is no pardon for sin*. Conscience must bear its awful burden: the heart's deepest wound must bleed without balm; the tears of repentance must be frozen at their source by the terrible thought—*there is no forgiveness!* 4. "No God!" *Then human life is degraded inexpressibly*. It has no supreme purpose—no aim beyond or above itself. Human reason can draw no light or strength from wisdom higher than its own. History has no goal. 5. "No God!" *Then sorrow is comfortless*. No voice has a right to say, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." You must bear your burden in your own strength. Death and darkness close all. 6. "No God!" *Then there is no wisdom higher than man's*; no strength stronger; no love deeper. No communion with an unseen, ever-present Friend and Helper, to lift our life above this world. No fountain of hope, purity, wisdom, for humanity. *No common object of trust or centre of unity for mankind*. Is it reasonable to think that it is *truth* which leads us into

this pathless, sunless desert of despair? Is it *falsehood* that has inspired the teaching of apostles and prophets, nerved the courage of martyrs, sanctified the genius and learning of some of the noblest intellects, inspired the purest and most loving and lovely lives; that is the salt of goodness in daily life, the lamp of home, the victory over death, the comfort of bereaved hearts? Or is it the truest as well as highest instinct in our nature that answers to the voice (Isa. xli. 10, 13; xliii. 11, 13, 25)?

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The depravity of a godless world, viewed by God.* This psalm is given us twice—as the fourteenth and the fifty-third. It is one of those which assumes a revelation of God as a redeeming God, and also the existence of a redeemed people of God. And by way of consequence it assumes the necessity of a Divine redemption in order to bring about “the generation of the righteous.” This could only have come about by Divine grace and by Divine power. Hence the very manifest distinction noted in the psalm between “the children of men” (ver. 2) and the people of God (ver. 4). The central part of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a commentary on this psalm by one of the most richly inspired penmen. When God saw, as with his all-piercing gaze he looked down from heaven, that among “the children of men” there was absolutely not one righteous, no, not one—manifestly, a “generation of the righteous” could never have existed save for a gracious redemption and regeneration from above. And while the Apostle Paul develops from this description of the world, man’s absolute need of a Divine interposition, we, in expounding the psalm itself, must work distinctly on its own lines, showing the state of things in the world on which the eye of God rested, and also how far that state of things exists in it still. The expositor must also take up the Christian standpoint, and show when and for what purpose the Lord looked down on such a sight.

I. A FEARFUL SIGHT ON WHICH “THE LORD LOOKED DOWN.” To what precise period of time the psalm refers, we have no means of knowing; nor at what exact period it was written. This, however, is of no consequence. Every point specified here can be verified now. 1. *The depravity of man had vented itself in the most egregious folly*, even in the denial, of God. There is ample room for the Christian teacher to expose the folly of such denial quite irrespectively of his theory of creation, be it the evolutionary one or no.<sup>1</sup> Either way, the (1) teleological, (2) cosmological, and (3) ontological proofs remain the same; in fact, the teleological proof is receiving abundant and amazing illustrations in modern discovery; so much so that its power again and again “overwhelmed” Mr. Darwin himself. The argument in Paley’s ‘Natural Theology’ may need resetting, but in substance has lost none of its force. While Mr. Herbert Spencer’s statement, that we know with undoubting certainty that there is “an infinite and eternal Energy from which everything proceeds” is one of which the Christian advocate may make large and effective use. That there is a God all Nature cries aloud in all her works. And not till a man is a “nabal,” “a fool,” a withered, sapless being, does he come to deny the Divine existence. Such denial has, however, not yet ceased. On the contrary, it has assumed in our days a boldness not even contemplated by the psalmist himself. There is (1) practical atheism, where men profess to know God, while in works they deny him; (2) agnosticism; (3) theoretical atheism, and even anti-theism; (4) and in some of the works of positivists,<sup>2</sup> it is even reckoned as a virtue for men to have “no fear of God before their eyes”! 2. *Such atheism is the most striking and grievous folly.* (1) It is irrational. (2) It is corrupting. (3) It breaks out into abominable acts. (4) In the course of its evolution,

<sup>1</sup> See Ebrard’s ‘Apologetics’ (Clark: 1886); Dorner’s ‘System of Christian Doctrine’ (Clark); three articles by the Duke of Argyll, on “Darwinism as a Philosophy,” in *Good Words*, March, April, May, 1888; ‘The Law of Causality,’ by Professor Watts, D.D., 1888; and ‘The Origin of the World, according to Scripture and Science,’ by Sir J. W. Dawson, F.R.S. (Hodder and Stoughton). Spurgeon’s ‘Treasury of David’ has a large number of forcible passages on the first verse of this psalm, which, if read with caution, may be found helpful and suggestive.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. George Eliot’s ‘Theophrastus Such.’

it makes aggressions on and even mocks at theology, religion, and religious people. (5) It will gradually dry up entirely the springs of social virtue. It may not do this in the first generation, if the denier of God has first been cast by early Christian teaching in the mould of social morality and goodness; but let generation after generation of atheists arise, and it will be seen that when the ties are snapped which bind men to their God, the ties which bind man to man are cut asunder as well! 3. *Such atheism is fearfully widespread among "the children of men."* "None that did understand, that did seek God." It is common among (1) the irreligious; (2) the free-thinkers; (3) philosophers, under the guise of philosophy; (4) scientific men, under the guise of science. The fact is, atheism is of the heart, not of the head. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and turns the very arguments which prove the Divine existence into an excuse for denying it! Its cry is, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us!" How grievous and terrible a sight is a world like this! How loathsome to infinite purity, when men are altogether become unprofitable, when there is "not one that doeth good, no, not one." Every expression in the psalm should be critically examined: they are all "gone aside;" they are all together become "filthy," "stinking," "corrupt," etc. There is a marvellous variety of words in the Hebrew for moral corruption. Nowhere in the whole world was the sense of sin, *as sin*, so deep as among the Hebrews. How was this? It will be seen how it was when we study our second question.

II. WHEN AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE DID THE LORD LOOK DOWN ON THIS MASS OF EVIL? The meaning of the psalmist could not go beyond the range of his inspiration and enlightenment. We live in a later age; the light is brighter now than then; and therefore the preacher will fall short alike of his privileges and of his mission, if he does not open up from this point more truth than it was possible for the psalmist to know. 1. *In an early stage of the world, God looked down on it to punish its iniquity.* The Deluge. Sodom and Gomorrah. The desolations which have come on Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Philistia, Jerusalem. And when great calamities come, the most irreligious men become the greatest cowards. "There were they in great fear, where no fear was." 2. *God looked on the wickedness of the sons of men, and resolved to call out therefrom a people for himself.* (Cf. Isa. li. 1, 2, Hebrew.) God called Abraham; and how his people became a family, a tribe, and a nation, the roll of sacred history records. And it is owing to this that the psalmist refers to "the generation of the righteous" (ver. 5), in distinction from "the children of men" (ver. 2). Hence it is and has ever been the case, that, however prevalent the depravity of men may have become, there have ever been some trusting hearts who have found their refuge in God.<sup>1</sup> 3. *God instituted a priesthood and sacrifices to instruct his people in the dread evil of sin.* The whole Levitical institute means this, and nothing less than this. The Law was a "child-guide," which took men to school, and taught them that nothing was right with men till they were right with God. 4. *God established a prophetic order, which should declaim against sin.* (See Isa. lix. 1—20, specially the fifteenth verse.) The mission of all the prophets was to speak for God, and uphold his claims before the people. And as they prophesied, God's treatment of the world's sin was being unfolded, as we see in the chapter from Isaiah to which we have just referred. 5. *In the fulness of the times, God sent forth his Son, who by his death should atone for sin, and who by his Spirit should conquer sin.* This, then, is like a God. We might have expected, from the psalmist's words, that God would take vengeance on the sinner and crush him. But no. He is a just God and a Saviour; condemning sin and saving the sinner (Rom. iii.). 6. *God has created in the hearts of his own a yearning after salvation and righteousness,* which is itself a prophecy of God's ultimate triumph over sin, and of a time when the anguish of his people shall give place to joy (ver. 7)! These desires of the holy are prophetic germs. The aspiration in the closing verse of the psalm<sup>2</sup> is one the

<sup>1</sup> See Hengstenberg on Psalms, vol. i. 216.

<sup>2</sup> According to Dr. Payne Smith, the allusion therein is to the return of the ark from captivity. The editor of the R.T.S. edition of the Psalms regards this last verse as a liturgical addition, which may have been added about the time of Ezra. (See note hereon in 'The Cambridge Bible'.)

fulfilment of which has been going on ever since, and will, till the Redeemer who has come out of Zion shall have completed his saving work. -C.

Vers. 1—7.—*Right views of God's government.* I. In considering God's moral government of the world, we should be careful to TAKE THE RIGHT STANDPOINT. Much depends on the way we look at things. We may be too near or too far off; we may lean too much to the one side or to the other. Here the standpoint is not earth, but "heaven." This is the perfect state. Here we take our place by the side of God, and look at things in the light of his truth. If we have the Spirit of Christ, the true Son of man, then, though on earth, we shall yet be "in heaven" (John iii. 13).

II. Another thing is that we should have regard to the TRUE STANDARD OF JUDGMENT (Ver. 2.) Much is being done to find out about the people who lived in the ages that are past; but we have to do more with the present day. Wise governments make inquiry as to population and the condition of the people—materially, intellectually, and socially. Here God is represented as holding inquest, and the chief concern is as to the *moral condition* of men. Religion is put first. If men are right with God, then all is right. The standard by which things are measured is the Law of God. How do men stand to God? Do they believe in God? What is the state of their mind and affections with reference to God? "To see if there be any that understand, and seek God." It is not what other men think of us, nor is it what we think of ourselves, that is of importance, but the supreme thing is what God thinks of us.

III. We are thus led to apprehend THE JUST RETRIBUTION IMPENDING. (Vers. 2—6.) Life presents a varied aspect. But when we look at it in the light of God, society divides itself into two great parties—the wicked and the righteous. 1. There is marked *diversity of character*. Contrasted with the righteous—"my people," as God calls them in his love and grace—there are the multitude who have gone aside, and who have waxed worse and worse, in their corruption and ungodly deeds. In this psalm there is something like a climax. In Ps. x. we have the ungodly, or fool, hugging himself in his fancied security, and saying, "I shall not be moved." Then in Ps. xi. there is an advance to a bold denial of God's omniscience and justice: "The foundations are destroyed." Then in Ps. xii. there is a further and still more fearful stride, in daring defiance of God: "Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" From this it is but a step to sit down "in the seat of the scornful," and to cry out in derision, "There is no God!" 2. But as there is diversity of character, so there will also be *diversity of retribution*. Judgment will be according to righteousness. *Reason* is appealed to (ver. 4). In wonder and pity, the question is asked, "Are they so senseless as not to see the consequences of their own wrong-doing?" But their stupidity and stubbornness will not stop the progress of events. *Conscience* is also appealed to (ver. 5). The term "there" brings the scene before us with the vividness of a picture. We see these wicked men "there" in their places; "there," in the midst of their works and their pleasures; "there," where they are priding themselves on their strength and their conquests; and "there" the hand of God seizes them, and they are stricken with terror (Lev. xxvi. 36). And what conscience confesses, *experience confirms* (ver. 6). The uneasy sense, that, after all, God is on the side of the righteous, causes fear, and events are continually occurring which go to prove that the fear is well-grounded. The nearer we come to God, the fuller our sympathy with God, the more complete our trust in God, the better shall we be able to judge as to God's doings. In God's light we shall see light. God's interest in man will be clear; God's holy grief because of the folly and wickedness of man, will be evident; and bright and enlivening as the outshining of the sun from the midst of clouds and darkness will be the love of God for his people, and his tender and abiding care of them through all the vicissitudes of their earthly life. The wicked dishonour God by their distrust and their scorn. Let us honour God by our faith in his eternal love and goodness, and by our unceasing prayer that his salvation may come to all nations. "Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honour and power unto the Lord our God!"—W. F.

Vers. 1—7.—*Conflict between God and the wicked.* The psalmist begins by lamenting the extent and the power of the atheism which reigns among men (vers. 1—3). But the righteous who have to suffer much on account of it, must not therefore



despair; fools shall certainly bring destruction upon themselves (vers. 4—6). He closes with the prayer that God would send deliverance to his people (ver. 7).

I. ATHEISM. (Vers. 1—3.) 1. *Atheism in the thought and in the desires.* (Ver. 1.) The “heart” in the Old Testament is not only the seat of desire, but of thought also. But it is more easy for a bad man to wish there were no God, than honestly to think it. 2. *Atheism in conduct.* This is described under a *positive* and *negative* aspect. *Corrupt* conduct—they are gone away from the right path into every wrong way; especially they prey upon the righteous as they would eat bread; *i.e.* it is as natural for them to be cruel and unjust towards them as it is to eat bread. They have tried to defeat the counsels of the poor. The *negative* aspect is that not any of them did good, nor did they seek God or call upon the Lord. God was wholly shut out of their lives and thoughts.

II. THE INCREDIBLE IGNORANCE OF ATHEISM. The “fool” hath said. “The fool” expresses the climax of imbecility. “Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge,” etc.? 1. *He is ignorant of God’s all-seeing scrutiny of the human race.* (Ver. 2.) In Gen. xi. 5 it is said, “The Lord came down from heaven, to see the city and the tower,” etc. Men from a very early period have had this thought of God’s perfect knowledge of human affairs. 2. *They have had experiences which filled them with great fear.* (Ver. 5.) God was in the righteous generation; where they thought themselves safe, there they began suddenly to be afraid. The discourse here is of Divine judgments actually inflicted. 3. *They have been frustrated in their best-laid plans.* (Ver. 6.) “Whatsoever the pious man plans to do for the glory of God, the children of the world seek to frustrate; but in the final issue their attempt is futile; for Jehovah is his Refuge.” This is the meaning; and their defeat should have taught them who was on the side of the righteous.

III. THE PRAYER SPRINGING OUT OF THIS CONFLICT BETWEEN GOD AND THE WICKED. (Ver. 7.) Prayer for the speedy deliverance of God’s people. This is the perpetual cry of the Church.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XV.

So much having been said in so many psalms of the privileges and blessings accorded to the righteous man (Pss. i. 3; iii. 8; v. 11, 12; iv. 9, 12, 18; x. 17, 18; xi. 7, etc.), the arrangers of this book thought it fitting to insert in this place a definition, or description, of who the righteous man is. They found a “psalm of David” (see title) in which such a description was set forth with singular force and brevity. The psalm is one of five verses. In the first verse the question is raised; the remaining four give the answer, which is arranged in two strophes of two verses each, the first verse of each strophe declaring the character of the righteous man positively, and the second verse negatively. The result is that five positive and five negative features are pointed out, by which the righteous man may be known. There is nothing to indicate at what period in David’s life this psalm was composed, except that it was after the establishment of the tabernacle on Mount Zion (ver. 1).

Ver. 1.—Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? rather, *Who shall sojourn?* Whom wilt thou accept as a sojourner in thy tent, to be near to thee, and consort with thee? Who shall dwell (*i.e.* whom wilt thou permit to dwell) in thy holy hill? The “tabernacle” and the “holy hill” of Zion are, of course, not to be understood literally. They are figurative expressions, pointing to the Divine presence and favour, and the blessedness of abiding in them.

Ver. 2.—He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness. An upright walk is the first requisite (comp. Gen. xvii. 1; Ps. xxvi. 3, 11; Isa. xxxiii. 15). Such a walk involves the doing of righteousness, not, of course, in absolute perfection, but with a sincere intention, and so as to have “the answer of a good conscience towards God” (1 Pet. iii. 21). And speaketh the truth in his heart. Not “*from* his heart,” as in the Prayer-book Version, which would make the reference one to mere truth of speech, but “*in* his heart,” which points to internal truthfulness—that truthfulness “in the hidden council-chamber of the soul,” which “holds no parley with what is false” (Kay).

Ver. 3.—He that backbiteth not with his tongue. Among the negative virtues the first place is given to the observance of the ninth commandment, probably because to

err in this respect is so very common a fault (see Jer. vi. 28; ix. 4; Jas. iii. 5—8). Nor doeth evil to his neighbour; rather, to his friend, or his companion—a different word from that used at the end of the verse, and implying greater intimacy. There is special wickedness in injuring one with whom we are intimate. Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. The good man does not, even when it is true, spread an ill report concerning his neighbour. He prefers to keep silence, and let the report die out (see Exod. xxxiii. 1).

Ver. 4.—In whose eyes a vile person is condemned. So the LXX., the Vulgate, Ewald, Hupfeld, Hengstenberg, and the Revised Version. Others prefer to translate, "He is despised in his own eyes, [and] worthless" (Aben Ezra, Hitzig, Delitzsch, Kay, 'Speaker's Commentary'). Either rendering furnishes a good sense; but the law of parallelism is very decidedly in favour of the former. As the righteous man honours those who fear God, so he condemns those who are vile or worthless. He is no respecter of persons. Men's outward circumstances are nothing to him. He awards honour or contempt according to men's moral qualities. But he honoureth them that fear the Lord. "It is no common virtue," says Calvin, "to honour pious and godly men, since in the opinion of the

world they are often as the offscouring of all things (1 Cor. iv. 13)." He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. The righteous man, if he happens to have sworn to do something which it turns out will be to his own hurt, nevertheless keeps his engagement (comp. Lev. v. 4, where *קָרַת* is used in the same sense).

Ver. 5.—He that putteth not out his money to usury. Usury, when one Israelite borrowed of another, was strictly forbidden by the Law (Exod. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 36; Deut. xxiii. 19). When the borrower was a foreigner, it was lawful (Deut. xv. 3; xxxiii. 20); and no discredit can attach to the practice, so long as the rate of interest charged is moderate (comp. Matt. xxv. 27). Here the writer contemplates only such usury as was forbidden by the Law. Nor taketh reward against the innocent; refuses, i.e., to take a bribe, either as judge or witness, when a charge is made against an innocent person. The contrary conduct was widely practised by the Israelites in later times (see Isa. i. 23; v. 23; Jer. xxii. 17; Ezek. xxii. 12; Hos. iv. 18; Micah iii. 11, etc.), and prevails generally in the East to the present day. He that doeth these things shall never be moved (comp. Ps. xvi. 8). He shall continue "steadfast, unmovable," having God "at his right hand," as his Protector and Sustainer.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*A standard of integrity.* "Lord, who shall abide," etc.? We may truly call this brief psalm a flawless gem of religious ethics, unmatched in all the treasures of heathen literature. It is a sufficient proof that the moral failures which surprise and distress us in many of the Old Testament saints were due to human infirmity—the imperfect character of the men and of the times, not to deficient revelation of truth and duty. Then, as now, men knew more than they practised. What the New Testament has done for morality is, firstly, to give us a *model* of holiness—a pattern life, which human imagination could never have framed, in the Person and life of *Jesus our Lord*; secondly, to supply *motives* to holiness only given in his gospel. But no higher *standard of spotless integrity* can be set forth than this psalm contains. The best commentaries on it are St. John's First Epistle and St. James's Epistle.

I. THE QUESTION. *Who is the guest of God?* "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" etc. In David's time there were *two* tabernacles—the ancient one, where the brazen altar remained, at Gibeon; and the new one, to which the ark had been removed, on Mount Moriah, which thenceforth became the "holy hill" (1 Chron. xv. 1; xvi. 1; 2 Chron. i. 3—6). But here is no question of priestly ritual or office, but of personal character before God; therefore under the image drawn from the actual tabernacle, the real thought is of spiritual communion with God (cf. Pss. xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4). Who is he who shall commune with God as a child with his father—to whom Christ's great promise shall be fulfilled (John xiv. 23)?

II. THE ANSWER. (Ver. 2.) The portrait is here drawn in three strokes. The rest of the psalm is the shading and colouring of the picture. 1. "*Walketh uprightly.*" Our *walk* in Scripture means our conduct, especially as regards ourselves, and as in God's sight—the inward, even more than the outward, life (Luke i. 6; Acts ix. 31;

Gen. v. 24). 2. "*Worketh righteousness.*" Deals justly, fairly, honestly, with others. This is the *outward* side, of which Christ says, "Let your light shine" (Matt. v. 16). 3. "*Speaketh truth in his heart.*" The correspondence of the inward and outward life. People sometimes speak truth *with the lips*—what is *literally* true, but with a different meaning *in the heart*. Transparent integrity is indicated—speech, the clear mirror of the hidden soul. No need to draw any strong line of distinction between these three—*walk, work, speech*. Like the sides of a triangle, each implies the other two. If we *walk with God*, we must needs deal justly with our fellows, and shall account our speech one of the most responsible parts of conduct towards God and towards man.

This is no impossible picture of ideal perfection—simply a description of whole-hearted obedience. Our Lord and Saviour expects no less. Strange if less were expected in a "disciple indeed" than in "an Israelite indeed" (John i. 47; viii. 31). Fellowship with our Father and our Saviour implies "walking in the light" (1 John i. 5—7; John xv. 1—5). This fellowship is the earnest of and preparation for *that* of which the earthly "tabernacle" and "holy hill" were the faint, vanishing shadows (Rev. vii. 15; xxi. 3, 27; xxii. 3, 4).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The man in undisturbed rest.* It matters little when this psalm was written, or by whom. Although there is no reason for denying its Davidic authorship, still its contents are manifestly and equally precious, whoever was the inspired penman, and whenever he penned these words. Manifestly, the psalm is a product of Judaism.<sup>1</sup> The Mosaic legislation had its ritual, but it was not ritualistic. There was not only an altar of sacrifice, but also a pillar of testimony and the tables of the Law; and to leave out either the sacrificial or the ethical part of the Hebrew faith would give as the residuum, only a mutilated fragment of it. This psalm is not one of those which in itself contains a new revelation, but one the inspiration of which is due to a revelation already received. The forms of expression in the first verse indicate this with sufficient clearness; the entire psalm suggests to us three lines of truth for pulpit exposition.

1. **THERE IS A HOME FOR THE SOUL IN GOD.** We do not regard the question in the first verse as one of despair, but simply as one of inquiry. It suggests that there is a sphere wherein men may dwell with God, and asks who are the men who can and do live in this sphere. The inquiry is addressed to "Jehovah," the redeeming God of Israel, who by this name had made himself known to the chosen people as their God—the Loving, the Eternal, the Changeless One. Moreover, there had been a tabernacle made, and afterwards the palace of the great King was erected on Mount Zion, the holy hill. "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." And inasmuch as this was the spot where God dwelt with men, to the devout soul the happiest place was that spot where he could meet with God; and if, perchance, he could there abide, not only to sojourn as for a night, but even to take up his permanent abode, he would realize the very ideal of good. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." But in the later form of scriptural thought it is not only in this place or that that the yearning spirit can find God, but everywhere; yea, *God himself* is the soul's home—a home neither enclosed by walls, nor restricted in space, nor bounded by time. And we know what are the features of that home—it is one of righteousness, of a purity which allows no stain; it is one of mercy, in which all the occupants have made a covenant with God by sacrifice; it is one of closest fellowship, in which there may be a perpetual interchange of communion between the soul and the great eternal God. And when we remember that on the one hand, God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, and that on the other hand, even all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, it must always be a wonder of wonders that the sinner should ever be allowed to find a home in God; and never can it be inappropriate to ask the question with which the psalm begins, "Lord,

<sup>1</sup> See Fausset's 'Studies in the Psalms,' lect. x. p. 84.

dost thou give it to all men to find their rest in thee? If not, who are these happy ones?" "Who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?"

II. ONLY SOME SOULS FIND GOD A HOME FOR THEM. The rest of the psalm answers the question which is raised at the outset of it. Inasmuch as the very phraseology of the psalm is built upon and assumes the divinely appointed institutions of priesthood; sacrifice, penitence, prayer, and pardon, it is needful only to remark in passing that the man who dwells in God's holy hill is *the one who accepts the divinely revealed plan of mercy and pardon through an appointed sacrifice*. But the fact that by God's mercy we are permitted to base the edifice of our life on such a foundation does by no means dispense with the necessity or lessen the importance of our erecting such edifice with scrupulous exactness according to the Divine requirements. The two parts of revealed religion cannot be disjoined now, any more than of old; the sacrificial and ethical departments must be equally recognized. And we are here called upon to study a Scripture portraiture of a virtue which God will approve, by seeing how a man who lives in God will demean himself before the world. 1. *His walk is upright*. His entire life and bearing will be of unswerving integrity. Bishop Perowne renders the word "uprightly," "perfectly," which in the scriptural sense is equivalent to "sincerely," with an absolutely incorruptible aim at the glory of God. 2. *His deeds are right*. They correspond with the simplicity and integrity of his life's aim and intent. 3. *His heart is true to his words*. He does not say one thing and mean another, nor will he cajole another by false pretences. 4. *He guards his tongue*. He will not "backbite" or "slander;" the verb is from a root signifying "to go about," and conveys the idea of one going about from house to house, spreading an evil report of a neighbour. 5. *He checks the tongues of others*. He will not take up a reproach against his neighbour. Retailers of gossip and scandal will find their labour lost on him. 6. *He abstains from injuring a friend*—by deeds of wrong. 7. *He estimates people according to a moral standard*, not according to their wealth. A base person is rejected, however rich. A man who fears the Lord is honoured, however poor. 8. *He is true to his promise*, though it may cost him much, even more than he at first supposed. 9. *He is conscientious in the use of what he has*. He will not be one to bite, to devour, or to oppress another by greed of gain, nor will he take a bribe to trick a guileless man. He will be clear as light, bright as day, true as steel, firm as rock. While resting on the promises of God as a ground of hope, he will follow the Divine precepts as the rule of his life. As Bishop Perowne admirably remarks, "Faith in God and spotless integrity may not be sundered. Religion does not veil or excuse petty dishonesties. Love to God is only then worthy the name, when it is the life and bond of every social virtue."<sup>1</sup> A holy man said on his death-bed, "Next to my hope in Christ, my greatest comfort is that I never wronged any one in business."

III. FROM THEIR HOME IN GOD SUCH SOULS CAN NEVER BE DISLODGED. (Ver. 5, "He that doeth these things shall never be moved.") The man is one who lives up to the Divine requirements under the gospel.

"Yet when his holiest works are done,  
His soul depends on grace alone."

Even so. And he shall not be disappointed. Note, in passing, it is not his excellence that ensures this security; but the grace of God honours a man whose faith and works accord with his will. 1. *No convulsions can disturb such a man*. His rest in Divine love is one which is secure against any catastrophe whatever (Ps. xlv. 1, 2; Rom. viii. 38, 39). 2. *Time is on the side of such a one*. For both the graces of faith and obedience will strengthen with age; while the Being who is his Stronghold is the same "yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Such characters, moreover, can never get out of date. 3. *No discoveries in science nor in any department can dim the lustre of such a life*. To trust in the great eternal God and to aspire to his likeness, is surely that of which no advance in human thought can ever make us ashamed. 4. *The faithful God will never desert such a one*. Whoever clings to God in faith, love, and obedience will never find his love unreciprocated or his trust unrequited. 5. *The promises made to such a one will never fail*. They are all

<sup>1</sup> Perowne, *in loc.*, and notes on the whole psalm in 'The Cambridge Bible.'

Yea and Amen in Christ; they are sealed by "the blood of the everlasting covenant." And hence they who repose their trust in them can never be moved.

In conclusion, the preacher may well warn against any attempt to divorce these two departments of character—trust and action. 1. Without trust in God there can be no right action. 2. Without the aim at right action we have no right<sup>1</sup> to trust in God.—C.

**Vers. 1—5.—A life without reproach.** In all ages there has been a sense of imperfection, and a longing and a cry for the perfect in human character. The ethical philosophers of Greece and Rome have given us their views; Christian teachers have aimed to set forth, in poetry and prose, their ideals of perfection; but it may be questioned whether anywhere we can find a truer or more beautiful portrait than this by the ancient Jewish poet. It has been said, "Christian chivalry has not drawn a brighter." And we might even dare to say that it compares well with the character of the perfect man as depicted by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. No doubt there are traits in the character that are peculiar to the times, and things are put differently in some respects from what they would have been in the light of the gospel; but we cannot contemplate the picture except with wonder and delight. In heart and tongue, in deed and life, as a member of society and as an individual, the man of this psalm is without reproach.

**I. HIS INSPIRATION IS FROM ABOVE.** It is the life within that determines character. Abraham walked before God, and therefore was exhorted to aim at perfection. The "tabernacle" is not wholly a figure of speech, but represents the meeting-place with God. For us Christ is the "tabernacle." Here we ever find light and strength. "Our life is hid with Christ in God."

**II. HIS CHARACTER IS MOULDED AFTER THE HIGHEST PATTERN.** (Vers. 2, 3.) The law of righteousness is his rule. Conscience is not enough; the lives of the good are not enough: there is more needed. The will of God as revealed to us is our true rule of faith and practice. There is a certain order observed—first, the person must be acceptable by entire surrender to God; then he must work by righteousness; lastly, his word must be truth. So God had regard first to Abel, and then to his offering (cf. 2 Cor. viii. 5).

**III. HIS SOCIAL LIFE IS MARKED BY THE NOBLEST VIRTUES.** (Vers. 3—5.) Some have counted here ten or eleven particulars; but it is better to regard the spirit than the letter. The chief things are truth, justice, and benevolence, while with these there is humility of spirit and charity towards all men. All this is brought out the more vividly by contrast with the selfish and worldly life of the wicked.

**IV. HIS HAPPY DESTINY IS SURE AS THE THRONE OF THE ETERNAL.** (Ver. 5.) There are things that can be moved; they have no stability or permanence. There are other things which cannot be moved; they are true as God is true, and stable as God is stable, with whom there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." This holds good of religion and the religious life (Heb. xii. 27, 28). There are people who have no fixed principles. They cannot be trusted. St. James compares them to the waves of the sea—driven with the wind and tossed (Jas. i. 6). But the man who trusts in God can say, "My heart is fixed;" and of such it is true—he "shall never be moved" (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 56—58; Acts xx. 22—24; xxi. 13).—W. F.

**Vers. 1—5.—The essentials of a spiritual religion.** This psalm is supposed by some to have been written on the removal of the ark to Zion. "As it is not only in David's time that the symbol has been placed above the thing signified, and a superstitious efficacy attached to the externals of worship, this psalm has an equal value in every age in keeping before the mind the great lesson that sanctity of life and truth of heart are the absolute essentials of a spiritual religion." *How can we dwell truly and in the most intimate abiding fellowship with God?* That is the question which the psalm answers; and the answer is—*Access to God lies open to none but his pure worshippers.* Two answers are given, each answer having both a positive and a negative form.

**I. FIRST ANSWER. 1. Positively.** (Ver. 2.) (1) *He walketh uprightly;* i.e. with integrity, with an undivided purpose of heart and mind. He does not try "to serve two masters." (2) *He worketh righteousness, or does the will of God.* Not his own will,

<sup>1</sup> See our homily on Ps. xxxvii. 2.

or the desires of the passions and appetites. He loves and does the right. (3) *He speaks the truth in his heart.* Speaks the truth because he loves it, not with unwilling constraint. He speaks it in his heart, because it dwells there, before he utters it with his tongue. 2. *Negatively.* (Ver. 3.) He is not one who injures others (1) by word; or (2) by deed; or (3) by listening to and propagating slander.

II. SECOND ANSWER. (Vers. 4, 5.) 1. *Positively.* (Ver. 4.) (1) *He turns away from the company of evil persons* because he has no sympathy with them. He contemns them. (2) *He honours the good* in every way that he can honour them—defending, applauding, imitating them. (3) *He keeps sacred his word or his oath.* "Not a casuist, who sets himself to find a pretext for breaking his word when it is inconvenient to keep it." 2. *Negatively.* (Ver. 5.) (1) *Not one who loves usury*, but is willing to help the poor from a generous heart (Exod. xxii. 25). (2) *Does not take bribes in the administration of justice.* Incorruptibly just. "Such a man may not take up his dwelling in the earthly courts of the Lord; but he shall so live in the presence of God, and under the care of God, that his feet shall be upon a rock." Would that all Christians answered to this picture!—S.

### EXPOSITION.

#### PSALM XVI.

THE sixteenth psalm is so far connected with the fifteenth that it is exclusively concerned, like the fifteenth, with the truly righteous man. It "depicts the true Israelite as rejoicing in God as the highest Good, and placing affiance in him in the face of Death and Hades" (Kay). The ascription of it to David in the title may well be acquiesced in. It has been called "a golden psalm," and the word "Michtam" in the title has been understood in this sense (Kimchi, Aben Ezra, margin of the Authorized Version); but that is more probably a musical term, like "Mizmor," "Maschil," "Shiggaion," etc. It is "full of the spirit of David," and remarkably evangelical in tone; its Messianic character is attested by the Apostle Peter (Acts ii. 25; xiii. 35). It seems to divide itself only into two strophes—one extending from ver. 1 to the end of ver. 6, and the other from ver. 7 to the conclusion.

Ver. 1.—*Preserve me, O God; i.e. keep me, guard me—protect me both in body and soul.* It does not appear that the writer is threatened by any special danger. He simply calls upon God to continue his protecting care. For in thee do I put my trust. In thee, and in thee only. Therefore to thee only do I look for protection and preservation

Ver. 2.—*O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord.* The ordinary Hebrew text, *אמר*, "thou hast said," requires the insertion of "O my soul," or something similar. But if we read *אמרתי*, with a large number

of manuscripts, with the LXX., the Vulgate, the Syriac, and most other versions, no insertion will be necessary. The meaning will then be, *I have said to Jehovah. Thou art my Lord; Hebrew, adonai—"my Lord and Master"* My goodness extendeth not to thee. This meaning cannot be elicited from the Hebrew words. *Tobah* is not "goodness," but "prosperity" or "happiness" (comp. Ps. cvi. 5); and *'aleyka* is best explained as "beside thee," "beyond thee." The psalmist means to say that he has no happiness beside (or apart from) God. (So Ewald, Hengstenberg, Cheyne, the 'Speaker's Commentary,' and the Revised Version.)

Ver. 3.—*But to the saints that are in the earth; rather, it is for the saints.* It (i.e. my prosperity) is granted me for the advantage of the saints that are in the land; i.e. of all the true Israelites. "I hold it in trust for them" (Kay). And to (rather, for) the excellent, in whom is all my delight. And, especially, I hold it in trust for "the inner circle of the excellent ones," in whom God takes pleasure (Ps. cxlvii. 11), and in whom therefore I also "delight."

Ver. 4.—*Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god.* This is the only note of sadness in the entire psalm, and it is inserted to add force by contrast to the joyous outburst in ver. 5. If men would not cleave to Jehovah, but would "hasten after"—or perhaps it should be translated "wed themselves to"—another god (see Exod. ii. 16, the only other place where the word occurs), then they must not expect "prosperity," or joy of any kind. Their "sorrows will be multiplied;" distress and anguish will come upon them (Prov. i. 27); they will have to pay dear for their apostasy. Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer. Drink offerings of actual

blood are not elsewhere mentioned in Scripture, and there is very little evidence of their having been offered by any of the heathen nations, though it is conjectured that they may have been employed in the worship of Moloch. It is therefore best to explain the expression, as here used, metaphorically, as drink offerings as hateful as if they had been of blood (comp. Isa. lxi. 3). Nor take up their names into my lips. By "their names" we must understand the names which they used—those by which they called their gods. The Law forbade the mention of these names by Israelites (Exod. xxiii. 13; Deut. xii. 3).

Ver. 5.—The Lord is the Portion of mine inheritance. God had said to Aaron, when he gave him no special inheritance in Canaan, "I am thy Part and thine Inheritance among the children of Israel" (Numb. xviii. 20). David claims the same privilege. God is his "Portion," and he needs no other. And of my cup. A man's "cup" is, in Scripture, his lot or condition in life (Ps. xi. 6; xxiii. 5)—that which is given him to drink. David will have God only for his cup. Thou maintainest my lot; *i.e.* thou makest it firm and sure (comp. Ps. xxx. 6, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved").

Ver. 6.—The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places. The "lines" which marked out the place of his abode (comp. Deut. xxxii. 9; Josh. xvii. 5). These had fallen to him "in pleasant places"—in Jerusalem and its near vicinity. Yea, I have a goodly heritage. Some explain "heritage" here by the "inheritance" of ver. 5. But the word used is different; and it is most natural to understand David's earthly heritage, or lot in life. This, he says, is "pleasing" or "delightful" to him.

Ver. 7.—I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel. God has become David's "Counsellor" (see Ps. xxxii. 8), makes suggestions to him which he follows, and so guides his life that he feels bound to praise and bless him for it. My reins also instruct me in the night seasons. The reins, according to Hebrew ideas, are the seat of feeling and emotion. David is "instructed" or "stimulated" (Hengstenberg) to bless God by the feelings which stir within him as he lies awake at night—feelings, we must suppose, of affection and gratitude.

Ver. 8.—I have set the Lord always before me. I have brought myself, that is, to realize the continual presence of God, alike in happiness and in trouble. I feel him to be ever with me. Because he is at my right hand (*i.e.* close to me, ready to

protect and save), therefore I shall not be moved. Nothing will shake me or disturb me from my trust and confidence.

Ver. 9.—Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth. The thought of God's continual presence at his right hand causes David's "heart" to be "glad," and his "glory"—*i.e.* his soul, or spirit (Gen. xlix. 6), man's true glory—to rejoice. My flesh also shall rest in hope. His "flesh"—his corporeal nature, united closely with his "heart" and "spirit"—rests, and will rest, secure, confident that God will watch over it, and make the whole complex man—body, soul, and spirit—to "dwell in safety" (Ps. iv. 8).

Ver. 10.—For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; literally, to *Sheol*, or "to Hades." The confidence in a future life shown here is beyond that exhibited by Job. Job hopes that he may not always remain in Hades, but may one day experience a "change" or "renewal" (Job xiv. 14); David is certain that his soul will not be left in hell. Hell (*Sheol*) is to him an "intermediate state," through which a man passes between his life in this world and his final condition in some blest abode. Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. The present Hebrew text has חַיִּים, "thy holy ones," *i.e.* thy saints generally; but the majority of the manuscripts, all the ancient versions, and even the Hebrew revised text (the *Keri*) have the word in the singular number, thus agreeing with Acts ii. 27, 31; xiii. 35, which give us the translation, *τὸν ὁσίων σου*, and declare the psalmist to have spoken determinately of Christ. Certainly he would not have spoken of himself as "God's holy one." The translation of *shāchath* (רָעָה) by "corruption" has been questioned, and it has been rendered "the pit," or "the grave," but quite gratuitously. The LXX. have διαφθορὰν as the equivalent; and the rabbinical commentators, giving it the same meaning, but expounding it of David, invented the myth that David's body was miraculously preserved from corruption.

Ver. 11.—Thou wilt show me the path of life; *i.e.* the path which leads to the Source and Centre of all life, even God himself—the way to heaven, in contrast with corruption and *Sheol*. In thy presence is fulness of joy; literally, *satiety of joy*—enough, and more than enough, to satisfy the extremest cravings of the human heart. At thy right hand; rather, *in thy right hand*—ready for bestowal on thy saints. Are pleasures for evermore. An inexhaustible store, which may be drawn upon for ever.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 10.—*The antidote to death.* "Thou wilt not leave," etc. More than thirty generations of believers read and sang this psalm, pondered and prayed over it, and drew, no doubt, sweet though vague comfort from this verse, before the hidden glory of its meaning was disclosed. The temple built by David's son was laid in ashes. The Scriptures were carried with the captives to Babylon, and brought back. A second and at last a third temple arose on Mount Moriah. Empires arose and fell. Above one thousand years rolled away. At last, one summer morning, when the Feast of Pentecost had returned in its yearly round, and Jerusalem was filled with gladness, the time arrived for putting the key into the lock. The same Spirit who inspired the prophecy, interpreted it. "Peter, standing up with the eleven," etc. (Acts ii. 14, 25—32).

## I. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH, IN ITS TWO MOST FEARFUL ASPECTS.

1. *The separation of the soul.* "My soul in hell," or "to hell." The Revisers here (and elsewhere) have given the Hebrew word *Sheol*, because the English word "hell" has come to be applied exclusively to the state of the lost. Thanks to the gospel, we have no word by which to translate this Hebrew word, because we have no corresponding idea. Often it is translated "grave;" but only figuratively—it never means a literal sepulchre. It is the world, place, or state of departed spirits, good or bad, happy or unhappy (in Greek, *Hades*). It is this view of death—the parting, rending asunder of spirit and body, which Solomon describes (Eccles. xii. 7). It is this which appals. We see the deserted house of clay; but where is the tenant? Gone, as if into nothingness and eternal silence. 2. *The corruption of the body.* The other view of death increases our distress. Death may come gently, as though but a deeper sleep; even with a solemn, sad beauty of its own. But the beauty death brings, it hastens to destroy. Just because that sleeping form is so dear, we must hasten to hide it out of sight. Cover it with green turf and flowers. Let not thought pierce the secrets of the grave. Nothing is plainer than that God *meant* death to be terrible. It is something wholly different to man from what it is to the lower animals. God knew we should love sin, and think it beautiful. So when he tells us "the wages of sin is death," it is as though he said, "Look at what death does to the body; that is the image of what sin does to the soul!" Whither shall we turn? The answer gleams forth in that word "not." "Thou wilt not leave," etc. Here is—

II. THE ANTIDOTE TO THE TERROR OF DEATH IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS. (Acts ii. 31, 32.) So St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 34—37). We are not now concerned with any reference these words may have to David himself. Modern critics are intensely anxious always to find a precise occasion for every psalm (after the manner of Horace's odes), though such a rule would be wholly misleading if applied to modern poetry. But suppose it so. What concerns us is the glorious event to which the Apostles Peter and Paul apply these words as a prophecy. "Now is Christ risen from the dead;" "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." 1. Christ's resurrection proves the *fact of immortality*; *q.d.* that death, which destroys the bodily life, does not touch the spirit, the self. "Behold," he said, "it is I myself"—not a spectre, a phantom. "This same Jesus," said the angels (Luke xxiv. 39; Acts i. 11). The *doctrine* or *belief* of immortality was common to Jews and Gentiles. The Egyptians based their religion on it. The Greeks had their Elysium and Tartarus. So other nations. What was wanted was not doctrine, but proof. No proof so entirely decisive as this—that One should publicly die, and be buried, and rise from the dead. The value of the resurrection of Christ's body lay in the proof thus given, that, though his body died, *he* lived. Death, then, does not end us. Hence the only way in which denial of immortality can now be maintained is by denying the resurrection of Jesus. For its reality there is not only (1) that mass of testimony which St. Paul summarizes (1 Cor. xv. 5—8; comp. Acts ii. 32, etc.); and (2) the utter failure of the Jewish authorities to produce any contrary evidence; but (3) the whole history of the founding of Christianity, based entirely on this fact. It would have been utterly contrary to human nature for the disciples to have preached and suffered as they did, had they not believed in the Saviour they preached; equally



impossible for them to have believed, if he had not really risen. Further, neither their faith nor their preaching would have availed, had not the living Christ fulfilled his promises (Matt. xxviii. 20; Acts i. 4, 5). 2. Christ's resurrection is *the assurance*. As he has been one with us in death, we are to be one with him in life. His resurrection is the seal both of his power and of his faithfulness; and both are pledged (John x. 28—30; xiv. 19). True, this flesh must "see corruption;" this "earthly house be dissolved." But for the humblest believer, as much as for an apostle, "to depart," is "to be with Christ;" "Absent from the body, at home with the Lord" (Phil. i. 23; 2 Cor. v. 8). And the body is to be "raised incorruptible;" not fleshly, but spiritual (Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Cor. xv. 50—53; John v. 28, 29; vi. 39). *Because he lives, where he lives, as he lives, we shall live also.*

CONCLUSION. All this turns on one simple, infinitely significant question—*Are we his?*

Ver. 11.—"*The path of life.*" The attractiveness and ease, or the reverse, of any path may depend on many conditions. Smooth or rough, steep or level, plain or confused with turns and windings; bright with sunshine or dark with tempest. But the main question is—Whither will it lead? We speak often of human life as a journey—a path along which, like pilgrims, we are travelling. Whither does it lead? Apart from Christ and his gospel, the only answer is—to the grave. Our Saviour's death and resurrection have changed all this; made both life and death something quite other than before. He lived in order to die; died in order to live again; lives again, to make us partakers of his life.

I. JESUS LIVED THAT HE MIGHT DIE. In quite another sense from what is true of all men, or of any other, his life was *the path of death*. In the prime of life and unrivalled usefulness, he thirsted for death; not the rest of the grave, but the conflict of the cross (Luke xii. 50). As the purpose of his coming (Matt. xx. 28). The fulfilment of prophecy (Luke ix. 31). The commission of the Father (John x. 17, 18). The pain of his joy (Heb. xii. 2).

II. JESUS DIED THAT HE MIGHT LIVE AGAIN. Life saw for him the *path of death*; death, the *path of life*. To this the text points, as interpreted by the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. 24—32). His resurrection has changed our whole view of death, and therefore of life (Heb. ii. 14, 15). What seemed the mountain barrier against which the last waves of life break, proves to be but the narrow strait leading into the boundless ocean of life indeed.

III. JESUS LIVES TO MAKE US PARTAKERS OF HIS LIFE. (John xiv. 3, 19; x. 28.)

CONCLUSION. It is a poor, mean view of Christianity which speaks of it as *preparation for death*. It is *preparation for life*. It is more—it is the beginning, the first stage, the infancy and childhood, of eternal life (1 John v. 11, 12; Col. iii. 1—4).

Ver. 11.—"*Fulness of joy.*" The natural effect of sin is to quench all desire after God, deaden all sense of his presence; to make the thought of him unwelcome, even terrible. "I heard thy voice, . . . and was afraid." The beginning of spiritual life is *turning* to God. Its highest attainments, joy in God. The supreme happiness to which it looks forward, fulness of joy in his presence.

I. God has bestowed on human nature A WONDERFUL CAPACITY FOR JOY. The sunshine of the heart, in which "all the flowers of life unfold." Look at the child with a birthday gift, a game, a holiday. Joy shines in his eyes, sets him singing and dancing. As our nature expands, and life's varied experience gathers strength, such simple exuberance of joy becomes impossible; but its sources are deeper, more manifold. No longer a dancing brook, but a deep well, sometimes brimming over. As the Bible is fuller than all other books of human life, so you can nowhere match the fulness and variety of its images of joy. Beside its warm Eastern pictures, our Western modern life looks bleak and sad. But above the whole range of common life, it opens the range of *spiritual* joy—the joy of forgiveness, of salvation, of knowledge, of trust, peace, security; of fellowship with God in Christ (John xv. 11; xvi. 20, 22). Higher still the Scripture lifts our thoughts—to the joy of angels; to God's own joy (Luke xv. 7, 10, 32; Zeph. iii. 17).

II. **GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL JOY.** Even the gladness of the frisking lambs, of the quats dancing in the sunshine, of the lark singing in the sky, is his gift; even as the momentary twinkle on the breaking spray is the sun's image. All pure joy is from God. There are impure joys—"the pleasures of sin." But as the mountain stream is pure at its source, though in its course through plains and cities it becomes foul and tainted; so the original desires and affections of our nature are pure. Sin alone corrupts.

III. **JOY UNKNOWN BEFORE, AND ELSE UNATTAINABLE,** comes into human life through faith in the Saviour—our crucified, risen, glorified Lord. "Then were the disciples glad" (John xx. 30). Well they might be; for the heaviest grief human hearts ever suffered was in a moment rolled away, and "life and immortality brought to light."

1. The joy of forgiveness—of knowing we are right with God (Rom. v. 11). 2. Of strength, safety, courage, comfort, in fellowship with Christ (John xiv. 18). 3. The joy of hope (1 Pet. i. 8).

IV. **"FULNESS OF JOY."** Joy unalloyed, complete, enduring, is not for this world. Not possible where all fairest flowers fade, fruits wither, brightest days have their sunset, fountains run dry. "In thy presence," etc. There will be many sources of "everlasting joy" (Isa. xxxv. 10) in the heavenly life: society, deliverance from pain, grief, sin, conflict, etc. (Rev. vii. 15—17). But the source of all, "the fountain of living waters" (Jer. ii. 13), will be God's presence (Rev. xxi. 22, 23).

CONCLUSION. Is *this* the heaven we desire; for which we are preparing? There is no other prepared for us. In that measure in which the presence of God, realized by faith, love, prayer, is a source of joy here and now, we have the earnest and pledge of "fulness of joy" for ever.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—"*Once thine, ever thine:*" *the song of a saint, the vision of a seer.* This psalm yields many texts for instructive discourse; but it is not on any of them that we propose now to dwell, but on the psalm as a whole. It is one of the most evangelical in all the five books of the Psalms. It opens with a prayer and a plea; but its main current is that of joy and praise. It is moreover repeatedly quoted in the New Testament, where, by the Apostles Peter and Paul, some of its words are declared to be those of David the prophet, and to have received fulfilment in Christ, and in him alone. We cannot, however, apply *all* the psalm to the Messiah. Some of it is evidently the expression of a private personal experience, and the utterance of a joyously devout saint, whose joy and devotion have both been inspired by a revelation of God to him; while other parts of it are the still more elevated utterances of one who was borne along by the Holy Ghost, to tell of visions which he saw of One in whom his royal line should witness the culmination of its glory! The touching expressions in 2 Sam. xxiii. 3—5 will account for both the words of the saint and the words of the seer which are here found. As the saint, David was inspired *by* revelation; as the seer, he was inspired *for* it.<sup>1</sup> And by making these two main divisions we shall, perhaps, best homiletically expound the psalm.

I. WE HAVE HERE THE SONG OF A SAINT INSPIRED BY REVELATION. In this light the contents of the psalm are very varied. We number them, not as following in exact logical or culminative order, but that we may call the student's and preacher's attention thereto, one by one; observing that we follow the Revised Version, which is most excellent. Here is: 1. *A prayer and a plea.* (Ver. 1.) Apparently he is in peril; what, we do not know; but, as is his wont, he makes his hiding-place in God; and very touching is the plea he puts in: "for in thee do I put my trust." Our God loves to be trusted. The confidence which his people repose in him is in his sight of great price; and he will not—cannot disappoint them. 2. *The psalmist has taken Jehovah to be his own God.* Jehovah—the eternal God—the God of Israel, was his own sovereign Lord. And as he confided to him all his cares, so he yielded to him

<sup>1</sup> On these two kinds of inspiration, see Professor Cave's admirable *Congregational Lecture*, 1888, on 'The Inspiration of the Old Testament;' and also Professor Ladd's 'What is the Bible?' (1888).

his entire homage. 3. *He finds in God his supreme joy.* "I have no good beyond thee" (cf. Ps. lxxiii. 25). All the largest desires of the soul have their perfect satisfaction in God. 4. *In his fellow-saints, he finds a holy brotherhood.* In them is his delight (Ps. xlii. 4; Mal. iii. 16). The closest and dearest bond of permanent friendship is found in the fellowship of holy life and love in God. 5. *He shuns the ungodly.* In blended pity and anger he looks on those of his nation who have lapsed into idolatry, and exchanged the worship of Jehovah for the service of idols (cf. Jer. ii. 13; Rom. i. 25, Revised Version). 6. *The portion which he has in God is secured to him.* (Ver. 5.) It cannot slip from his grasp, nor be snatched out of his hand, nor can he in any way be despoiled thereof. God will uphold him in possession, and will give him timely counsel and assistance (ver. 7). 7. *God is ever before him,* as a constantly present Friend. He is no abstraction. But one ever at his right hand, to guard, guide, advise, gladden, and strengthen. Yea, to give him a steadfast, unconquerable firmness in the midst of numerous foes. 8. Consequently, *he has a heritage of wealth with which he is well pleased.* (Ver. 6.) The inheritance assigned to him as it were by lot, and marked out as it were by line, was one which gave him a plenitude of delight. 9. For he knows that the near and dear relationship between himself and God is one which not even death itself can disturb.<sup>1</sup> David caught a glimpse of the sublime truth of how much God had meant when he told Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (cf. Matt. xxii. 31, 32). We have almost the truth which is expressed in 1 Thess. v. 10. "My flesh," he says, "shall rest in hope."<sup>2</sup> Yea, more; David even peers beyond the unseen state (Sheol); he beholds it conquered, and the one whose God is the Lord delivered for ever from the hold of death. And even this is not all; but he sees far, far beyond, awaiting the believer, fulness of joy and eternal delights in the immediate presence of the great eternal God. So that the burden of the song may be summed up in our final thought on this aspect of the psalm, that: 10. *Once God's, he was his for ever!* "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol" (cf. Ps. xlviii. 14; lxxiii. 26). Is it any wonder that, with such a heritage in Divine love, the psalmist should find his heart glow with joy, and that his tongue should break out into shouts of praise? Surely if such a God is ours, and ours for ever, we are well provided for, and shall be well guarded, throughout eternity.

II. WE HAVE HERE ALSO THE VISION OF A SEER WHO WAS INSPIRED FOR A REVELATION. We have in that memorable sermon on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter opened up the kingdom to Israel, a remarkable reference to this very psalm (cf. Acts ii. 25—31). In which the apostle declares that what David said respecting the Holy One, he spoke as a prophet, seeing far ahead the fulfilment of the covenant God had made with him.<sup>3</sup> And in Acts xiii. 34—37 the Apostle Paul makes an equally distinct reference to this psalm, while he even more emphatically declares this prophetic utterance to be a Divine declaration. And we get a plain and distinct account of such far distant scriptural forecasts in 2 Pet. i. 21. Thus we can clearly trace a second significance in the latter half of Ps. xvi., as it recounts "the sure mercies of David." For, indeed, if it had not been for the Divine promise and oath made to him—a promise and an oath the fulfilment of which could never be disturbed by the vicissitudes of time, there might not and probably would not have been the like joyful repose of the saint in God, in the prospect of death and of eternity. So that, although the vision of the prophet comes second in our consideration, it was really the first in importance, and the foundation of all the rest. And all this may be brought home in fruitful teaching, in four or five progressive steps. 1. *David had had a direct revelation that his throne should be established for ever.* (2 Sam. xxiii. 3—5; vii. 12—16; Pss. lxxii.; lxxxix. 20—37.) And to his dying day, amid all the disturbances of his house, this covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," was all his salvation, and all his desire. 2. *In the foreglancings of prophetic vision he saw the Holy One in the*

<sup>1</sup> It has been asked whether a view so lofty was the average one in Israel. Surely such a question is needless. We should meet it with an emphatic negative. This was no more the average view of Israelites than the holiest men of God are the average men in Christendom!

<sup>2</sup> Note Bishop Perowne on the word "flesh."

<sup>3</sup> See the following passages: 2 Sam. vii.; 1 Chron. xvii.; Pss. ii.; xviii. 50; xxii.; xlv. lxxii.; lxxxix. 22—24; cx.; cxxxii. 11, 12.

coming age as its Ruler and its Head.<sup>1</sup> 3. He beheld also the Holy One going down into the tomb. To Sheol; not hell, but Hades, the invisible realm of the departed. 4. He beheld the Holy One rising again. As the Lord and Conqueror of death; as the Head of the redeemed, he beheld him leaving the grave, and going forward and upward as their Forerunner. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus carries along with it that of all his followers. 5. It was on this sublime Messianic hope that the psalmist built his own. And, indeed, it was on this that such as Abraham fixed their gaze, with leaping gladness and thankful joy. "That which is true of the members is true, in its highest sense, of the Head, and is only true of the members because they are joined to the Head" (Perowne); 1 Thess. v. 10.

III. IN COMBINING THE SONG OF THE SAINT AND THE VISION OF THE SEER, WE HAVE MOST ELEVATED AND ELEVATING TEACHING FOR OURSELVES. 1. Here is the great secret of life made known to and by the holy prophets. As one expositor remarks, the antithesis in the psalm is not between life *here* and life *there*, but between a life in God and a life apart from him. 2. That God should have disclosed this great secret by his Spirit can bring no difficulty whatever to those who understand communion with God. 3. The grand redemption of God's grace is realized in a fellowship of holy souls in blest and everlasting relation to God as their Portion, their endless Heritage of infinite purity and delight. 4. This fellowship of life centres round him whom no death can retain in its hold, even round him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Believers are one in God because one in Christ. 5. His triumph over the tomb is the pledge of theirs. He has gone ahead as their Forerunner, and has in their name taken his place in the Father's house, preparing theirs likewise. 6. Hence the entire blessing of God's great salvation is summed up in the words, "Thou wilt show me the path of life." In which phrase, as Austin<sup>2</sup> finely says, "we have a guide, 'Thou;' a traveller, 'me;' a way, 'the path;' the end, 'life.'" Happy are they who choose this Guide, who follow this way, who inherit such a life! How the trouble and perils of this life seem to dwindle away when we can realize that such a God and such a home are ours! not ours only, but also of all those who have said to Jehovah, "Thou art my Lord"!—C.

Vers. 1—11.—*Life-long convictions.* Happy the man who holds to his faith in God through all changes and chances of this mortal life! Religion to him is a reality. He speaks of what he knows. He commends what he has proved to be good. He can rejoice in the assurance that God, who has been with him hitherto, will keep him safely to the end, and that the portion which satisfied his soul in this life will satisfy his soul eternally. We may take the psalm as expressing certain *life-long convictions*.

I. THAT GOD IS TO BE TRUSTED AS THE SUPREME GOOD. Man is prone to seek happiness apart from God. This proves both his littleness and his greatness: his littleness in turning from God; his greatness, as nothing earthly can satisfy him, and his soul is restless till it finds rest in God. "Thou art my Lord" is the true response to God's declaration, "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod. xx. 2; Ps. lxxiii. 25).

II. THAT THE SAINTS ARE TO BE REGARDED AS EARTH'S TRUE NOBLES. When God has his right place, man gets his right place also. He is valued, not for his wealth, but for his worth; not for his circumstances, but for his character; not for his high standing among men, but for his near relation in love and holiness to God. If we love God, we shall love what God loves. If we delight in God, we shall delight in what God delighteth in. As a poet of our own has taught us—

"'Tis only noble to be good.  
Kind hearts are more than coronets,  
And simple faith than Norman blood."

III. THAT WICKEDNESS, WHATEVER IT PROMISES, MUST IN THE END BRING WRETCHEDNESS. The wicked may be many; they may seem to prosper; they may appear as if they were to prevail, and have their own way in everything. There will be at times strong temptations to join them—to live as they live, to eat, drink, and be merry. But the heart that has known God recoils with horror from such a thought. What

<sup>1</sup> See Hengstenberg's 'Christology,' ii. 140, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 1637, quoted by C. H. Spurgeon, *in loc.*

can come of forsaken God, but misery? This is the witness of history, observation, and experience. And we should be thankful that it is so. It is a proof of God's love, as well as of God's righteousness. That "the way of transgressors is hard" puts for many a warning in their path, and sounds for many a merciful call in their ears. "Turn ye: why will ye die?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11; Isa. lv. 1—7; Job xxxiii. 27—30).

IV. THAT THE DESTINY OF THE GOOD IS DIVINELY ORDERED. Life is not fixed by chance, or by blind fate, or by man's own designing and devising. It is of God's ordering (Prov. xix. 21). As it is with the stars above, so it is with souls beneath. They stand as God ordains (Psa. cxix. 91; cxlvii. 3, 4). As it was with Canaan, which was divided among the tribes by lot (Numb. xxvi. 55; Josh. xiii. 6), so it is with the inheritance of God's believing people; it is settled by the hand of God. In many things—as to our birth, and kinsfolk, and associations, and so on—we have no choice. But trusting in God, we cheerfully accept the place which he has appointed for us. And when we are free to choose, we seek counsel of God, and gladly and gratefully rest in his will (Heb. xiii. 5). What the King of Babylon did according to his lights when at the parting of the ways (Ezek. xxi. 21), we do, in a higher way (Acts ix. 6).

V. THAT GODLINESS HAS THE PROMISE BOTH OF THIS LIFE AND OF THAT WHICH IS TO COME. 1. *This life.* (Vers. 6—8.) 2. *Guidance.* (Ver. 7.) 3. *Protection.* (Ver. 8.) 4. *The life to come.* (Ver. 11.) This truth, dimly revealed of old, shines out brightly and beautifully in the gospel.—W. F.

Ver. 11.—*The future state.* In this prayer it is implied that there is one "path," which is truly "the path of life"—the path by which we can reach the highest ideal of our being, and be blessed for ever; and further, that God, and God alone, is able to show us this path. It may be said that the prayer has been answered in the fullest sense by Christ Jesus. We may use the words with reference to Christ's teaching as to a future state. Christ has shown us—

I. THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE STATE. Reason may speculate, imagination may form pictures, the instincts of the heart may prompt the hope that there is a future state of being; but it is only through Holy Scripture that we attain to full conviction. What was dimly revealed to Old Testament saints has been now "made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. i. 10).

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER AS DETERMINING MAN'S PLACE IN A FUTURE STATE. Our Lord always teaches that holy character is indispensable to blessedness. True life is from God, and tends to God (John v. 26; Col. iii. 3). "The path of life" must be entered upon here, or we can never reach from earth to heaven. Faith and action determine character, and character settles destiny. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John viii. 24).

III. THE INTIMATE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE LIFE THAT NOW IS AND THAT WHICH IS TO COME. There is continuity. Death transfers, but it does not transform. Life is the seed-time for eternity. Our present actions, good or bad, determine our future fate (Gal. vi. 7, 8; Rom. ii. 6—10).

IV. THAT EVERYTHING TENDS TO A GREAT CRISIS, WHEN JUDGMENT SHALL BE GIVEN UPON ALL MEN. Our Lord teaches us that judgment is already begun. Whatever we do has its effect. Every deed of self-denial and justice and love brings its blessing, and every deed of evil its curse. But there is to be a final judgment, and our Lord shows us that the acts of that great day will be based on law; that God will render unto every man according to his works. It is very striking also that our Lord should put such emphasis upon acts of love and charity (Matt. xxv. 31—46).

V. THAT HE HIMSELF WILL HOLD THE SUPREME PLACE AS JUDGE AND KING IN THE WORLD TO COME. If the future state is a reality, this has been made certain by Christ (John ii. 25). If character will determine our place in eternity, it is through Christ that we are to attain to the meetness of character required (Col. i. 12). If the awards of the judgment are final, it is because Christ is Judge, and there can be no appeal against his decisions. If the future state is, for the good, to be a state of highest and divinest "life," it is because they have been made partakers of the life of Christ, and shall dwell for ever with him in the light and love of God.—W. F.

Vers. 1—6.—*Grounds of the prayer for preservation.* This psalm is golden in

thought, feeling, and expression. The substance of it is comprised in the first verse: "May God preserve him who has no other refuge in which he can hide but him!" The subject up to the end of the sixth verse may be called—*Grounds of the prayer for preservation.*

I. HE HAS TAKEN GOD FOR HIS SUPREME GOOD. (Ver. 2, "I said to Jehovah, Thou art my Lord; beside thee I have no good.") The "good" here in contrast with the "sorrows" in ver. 4. "Whom have I in heaven but thee," etc.? It is the answer of the soul to, "Thou shalt have no other gods but me." "Thou, O Lord, art my Portion, my Help, my Joy, my All in all."

II. HE DELIGHTS IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALL THE GOOD. (Ver. 3.) He trusts God in company with the best and noblest in the land. If they trust and serve, it is my privilege also. That is one thought. Another is—I love the holy and the excellent who reflect most of God; not the worldly rich and great and powerful. The saints and only they are the excellent to him, even as they are to God. He is one with God in this—he is wholly on God's side; therefore, he says, save me from impending danger.

III. HE ABHORS APOSTATES AND THEIR IDOLS. (Ver. 4.) He will be loyal, and refuse all participation in the fellowship or the rites of the surrounding idolaters. Even the names of the false gods he refuses to take upon his lips. Philosophy, and luxury, and commerce, and wisdom in government, and the glories of conquest, combined to recommend the seductive idolatries of Philistia, Phœnicia, Syria, Assyria, Egypt. But he regarded them all with righteous scorn. We have need of a strong and simple trust in God, and sympathy with the good, to be able to repudiate the idolatries that ever surround us—the worship of wealth, success, fashion.

IV. HE POSSESSES ALL THINGS IN GOD. (Vers. 5, 6.) The Lord is the Portion of mine inheritance—an allusion to the division of the land among the tribes. And this was preserved to him by the protecting power of God. God was also his meat and drink (equivalent to "cup"). "The lines," etc.—in allusion to the ancient custom of marking out plots of land by measuring-lines. He had a goodly heritage. "What must not he possess who possesses the Possessor of all?" "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."—S.

Vers. 8—11.—*The confidence of the psalmist's faith in the future.* The two main ideas of the writer are (1) a sense of Divine privilege in having God as his chief Good; and (2) a confiding, hopeful prayer for deliverance from death. Not, of course, from death altogether; he could not hope to be finally delivered from the grave. The prayer, therefore, must have been for deliverance from *impending* danger, from death that was *then* threatened at that time, and for being conducted into and preserved in "the path of life." The application which has been made of the ninth and tenth verses to Christ by Peter and Paul has led to a misunderstanding of the original sense. They say that the prayer was fulfilled in Christ, and not in David; that David did see corruption, and that Christ did not. But the best Hebrew scholars say that it is a confident prayer, not to be given over to death, but to be preserved in the way of life. We must understand, of course, death at present; for it could not mean death altogether, nor deliverance from the grave after death. The general subject of these verses, then, is—*The confidence of the psalmist's faith in the future*, because he had chosen God as his chief Good.

I. THE SENSE OF GOD'S PRESENCE INSPIRES A FEELING OF SAFETY. (Ver. 8.) "Not in the moment of peril only, but at all times has he his eye fixed upon God." "God in David's eyes is no abstraction, but a Person, real, living, and walking at his side," and able to protect him from danger. Have we such a sense of companionship with God? I shall not be moved—neither in *character*, nor in *purpose*, nor in *work*.

II. HE REJOICED IN THE CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WOULD NOT ALLOW HIM TO PERISH. (Vers. 9, 10.) "Flesh" here, as always, means the living body—never means a corpse. "Shall rest in hope," equivalent to "shall dwell in safety;" and must be understood of this life. No stress can be laid on the word "leave," which means "give over to." He is expressing the confidence "that God will not leave him to perish, will not give him up to be the prey of the grave," which was the design of his enemies. The lessons for us—that God's time is our time, and that he will not abandon us to our spiritual enemies, but will afford us effectual protection.

III. HE REJOICED THAT GOD WOULD MAKE KNOWN TO HIM THE WAY TO LIFE. (Ver. 11.) Not only preserve him in life, but lead him on to that life whose joy is beholding the Divine face, and partaking of the everlasting pleasures which are at his right hand. The idea of immortality springs out of the sense of his relationship to God; for he could not think that such a relationship could end with death. If we are the sons of God, that is the strongest guarantee that we shall continue to partake of God's life, rich and manifold and everlasting. Christ said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." This passage has its highest fulfilment when applied to the resurrection of Christ.—S.

Ver. 8.—*The supreme choice of the soul.* "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." "I have set Christ always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

I. THIS IS TO MAKE THE JOURNEY OF LIFE FULL OF LIGHT. Pillar of cloud and fire. And this, in whatever view you look at this life—whether as a stage on which *work has to be done*, or on which good has to be acquired, or as a journey to reach our destiny. By this light we can clearly see the nature of the work that must be done; the kind of good that must be sought; and the glorious destiny awaiting us. But let a man make himself or the world the light by which he walks, the guide he follows, then his work, his well-being, and the future all become dark. Some dark moments there will be, when God's way is through the clouds or through the great deep.

II. THIS WILL MAKE US TRULY STRONG. "I shall not be moved." We may know duty, self-interest, and the way to honour, and yet be too weak to follow them. Weakness of purpose and will is our misery and guilt. It is not merely our misfortune, but our sin. Importance of strength. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." The only way to become strong is by "looking unto Jesus." All other stimulants soon spend their strength and leave us prostrate. But the setting God always before us will endow us with all strength to resist all temptations, and all fortitude to endure.

III. THIS IS TO MAKE THE AIM OF LIFE REALLY GREAT. Our lives are mostly paltry and little. We go about filled with little vanities and ambitions, aiming at little ends, and content with little results. Often under the guise of humility our larger aims are mostly of the depraved or secular sort—wealth; social position; fame on the battlefield, or in the senate, or in literature. But to "have God always before us" is the real lasting greatness. This is the only true ideal of life.

IV. THIS IS TO MAKE THE WAY OF LIFE SECURE. "Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." 1. Not moved *with fear*. 2. Not moved *from his hope*. 3. Not moved *from his righteousness*.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XVII.

THIS psalm is termed "a prayer"—"a Prayer of David." It consists, no doubt, mainly of a series of petitions (vers. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14); but contains also a number of verses which have no precatory character (vers. 3, 4, 5, 10—12, 15); and, on the whole, it cannot be said to be occupied with supplication to a greater extent than many of the compositions which are simply termed "psalms." Probably it was called a "prayer" because the writer himself seemed so to entitle it in ver. 1. David's authorship is generally allowed, since the composition has "the marked characteristics of

David's early style" ('Speaker's Commentary'). The current of thought and language is vehement and abrupt; there is a deep dependence upon God, and at the same time a warmth of indignation against the writer's enemies, found frequently in the Davidical psalms, and not very noticeable in the others. There is also an earnest faith in a future life (ver. 15), which was a marked feature of David's character, but not very common among his contemporaries. The time in David's life to which the psalm belongs is uncertain; but it has been conjectured, with a certain amount of probability, to have been written during the heat of the persecution by Saul, perhaps when David

was pursued after by the wicked king in the wilderness of Maon (1 Sam. xxiii. 26). (So Hitzig, Moll, and the 'Speaker's Commentary'.)

The metrical arrangement is somewhat doubtful. Perhaps the best division is that of Dr. Kay, who makes the poem one of four stanzas—the first of five verses (vers. 1—5); the second of four (vers. 6—9); the third of three (vers. 10—12); and the fourth also of three (vers. 13—15).

Ver. 1.—Hear the right, O Lord (comp. Ps. ix. 4). Here and elsewhere the psalmist assumes that right is on his side, and that he is persecuted unjustly. Unless he had been convinced of this, he could not have called on God to vindicate him. The narrative in 1 Sam. xviii.—xxvii. fully justifies his conviction. Attend unto my cry (comp. Pss. iv. 1; v. 2; lxi. 1). *Rinnah*, the word translated "cry" here (and in Ps. lxi. 1) is a strong term: it means "shout," "outcry"—most often, though not here, "a shout of joy." Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips; rather, *feigning lips*, or *gulfeful lips*—lips, i.e., that speak falsehood knowingly.

Ver. 2.—Let my sentence come forth from thy presence. David does not doubt, any more than Job (xiii. 18), what the sentence will be. As right is on his side (ver. 1), it must be in his favour. Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal; literally, *Let thine eyes behold equities*.

Ver. 3.—Thou hast proved mine heart (comp. Pss. xxvi. 2; lxi. 9; xc. 9; cxxxix. 23). "Proved" means "tried," "tested," examined strictly, so as to know whether there was any wickedness in it or not. Thou hast visited me in the night. The night is the time when men can least escape those searching, testing thoughts which God's providence then especially sends, to "try the very heart and reins" (Ps. vii. 9). Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; rather, *and findest nothing*. The process was one begun in the past, and continuing on in the present. God was ever searching David and trying him; but "found nothing," i.e. no alloy, no base metal, no serious flaw in his character; not that he was sinless, but that he was sincere and earnest—a true worshipper of God, not a hypocrite. I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (Jas. iii. 2). David's resolution to "keep the door of his lips" would have a chastening influence over both his thoughts and acts.

Ver. 4.—Concerning the works of man; i.e. "with respect to the actions of ordinary

life"—here called "the works of Adam"—i.e. of the natural man. By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. By attending to thy Law, and following it (see Ps. cxix. 11), I have refrained myself from sin, and avoided the wicked courses of the violent (comp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 4—10).

Ver. 5.—Hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. So De Wette and Rosenmüller; but most recent critics prefer to consider the words as an assertion rather than a prayer, and translate, "My steps have held fast to thy paths: [therefore] my feet have not been moved" (Kay, Hengstenberg, Alexander, Cheyne, 'Speaker's Commentary,' Revised Version).

Ver. 6.—I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God (comp. vers. 1, 2). Having established, as the ground of his claim to be heard of God, his own sincerity, steadfastness, and virtuous course in life (vers. 3—5), David now recurs to his original intent, and resumes his "prayer." He is sure that God will hear him, since his prayer is grounded on "right." Incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech (comp. Pss. lxxi. 2; lxxxviii. 2, etc.).

Ver. 7.—Show thy marvellous loving kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. It is uncertain to which clause of the sentence the word *יְיָיִקָּרֵב* belongs. Its position seems to attach it rather to those who resist God than to those who trust in him. See the marginal version, which has, *O thou that savest them which trust in thee from those that rise up against thy right hand*. But the rendering in the text of the Authorized Version is preferred by most writers.

Ver. 8.—Keep me as the apple of the eye (comp. Deut. xxxii. 10, where the same simile is used). Here, however, the expression employed is still more tender and more practical: "Keep me," says David, "as the apple, daughter of the eye." Hide me under the shadow of thy wings. This seems also to be a reminiscence of Deuteronomy, where, after the mention of the "apple of the eye," the writer continues, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him" (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12; comp. further Pss. xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1; lxiii. 8; xci. 4).

Ver. 9.—From the wicked that oppress me; or, *lay me waste*—treat me as invaders treat an enemy's territory (see Isa. xv. 1). From my deadly enemies, who compass me about; literally, *my enemies in soul*—those who in heart and mind are wholly set against me. When hunted by Saul upon the moun-



tains, David was often "compassed about" with foes (1 Sam. xxiii. 14, 15, 26; xxvi. 20).

Ver. 10.—They are enclosed in their own fat (comp. Dent. xxxii. 15; Job xv. 27; Ps. cxix. 70). Self-indulgence has hardened their feelings and dulled their souls. An organ enclosed in fat cannot work freely. So their feelings cannot work as nature intended through the coarseness and hardness in which they are, as it were, embedded. With their mouth they speak proudly (comp. Ps. xii. 3, 4; lxxxvi. 14).

Ver. 11.—They have now compassed us in our steps; rather, [*following*] *our steps*, they now compass me (comp. ver. 9; and see 1 Sam. xxiii. 26). They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; rather, *they have set their eyes, to cast [me] down to the earth*. The smile of the lion is already in the writer's mind. As the lion, before making his spring, fixes his eyes intently upon the prey—not to fascinate it, but to make sure of his distance—with intent, when he springs, to cast the prey down to the earth; so it is now with my enemies, who have set their eyes on me. (So Dr. Kay, the 'Speaker's Commentary,' and the Revised Version.)

Ver. 12.—Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey; literally, *his likeness [is] as a lion that is greedy to rend* (comp. Ps. vii. 2; x. 9; lviii. 4). And as it were a young lion (*kēphîr*, "a lion in the first burst of youthful vigour") lurking in secret places; rather, *crouching*. The attitude of the lion when he is just preparing to spring.

Ver. 13.—Arise, O Lord (comp. Ps. vii. 6; ix. 19; x. 12; xlv. 26, etc.). Having described the character of the wicked man, and pointed out his ill desert (vers. 9—12), the psalmist now invokes God's vengeance upon him. "Right" requires equally the succour of the godly and the punishment of the ungodly man. Disappoint him, cast him down; literally, *get before him, bow him down*; i.e. intercept his spring, and bow him down to the earth (see Ps. xviii. 39). Deliver my soul from the wicked. This will be the result of the interposition. When the ungodly are cast down, the righteous are delivered out of their hand. Which is thy sword. A true statement (see Isa. x. 5), but scarcely what the writer intended in

this place, where he is regarding the wicked as altogether opposed to God. It is best to translate, with the Revised Version, *Deliver my soul from the wicked by thy sword*.

Ver. 14.—From men which are thy hand, O Lord; rather, *from men, by thy hand*, as in the margin of the Authorized Version, and in the text of the Revised Version. From men of the world; i.e. men who are altogether worldly, whose views, aspirations, hopes, longings, are bounded by this life—the "children of this world," as our Lord expressed it (Luke xvi. 8). Which have their portion in this life; i.e. who have here all that they will ever receive, and all that they care to receive. And whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure; rather, *with thy stores*—the good things that thou makest the earth to produce. There seems to be some allusion here to the frequent worldly prosperity of the ungodly (comp. Job xii. 6; xxi. 7—13; Ps. lxxiii. 3—12). They are full of children (so Job xxi. 8, 11; xxvii. 14). And leave the rest of their substance to their babes (comp. Ps. xlix. 10). No doubt this is often the case; but the ill-gotten gains handed on by the wicked to their children seldom prosper (see Job xxvii. 14—17).

Ver. 15.—As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; i.e. "As for me, I do not envy the wicked man's prosperity. I set against it the blessedness of which I am quite sure. I in my righteousness shall behold the face of God, have the light of his countenance shine upon me, and thus be raised to a condition of perfect happiness." Moreover, I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. David had already spoken of death as a "sleep" (Ps. xiii. 3). Now he speaks of "awaking." What awaking can this be but an awaking from the sleep of death? When he so awakes, he says, he will be "satisfied with God's likeness." The word used is the same as that employed in Numb. xii. 8, of the manifestation of the Divine glory to Moses—viz. *temunah*. David therefore expects to see, on awaking, a similar manifestation. He will have the enjoyment of the "beatific vision," if not in the Christian sense, at any rate in a true and real sense, and one that will wholly "satisfy" him.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 15.—*True satisfaction*. "As for me . . . thy likeness." "I shall be satisfied." This is a great and bold thing to say. It implies one of two things—either a low standard of satisfaction, a poor measure of what it takes to satisfy a human soul; or else a prospect beyond this world. If only a question of lower wants—"What shall I eat . . . drink? wherewithal be clothed? what wages shall I earn? what holidays and amusements secure?"—then if your desires be temperate, you may easily say, "I shall be satisfied." But if it be a question of your soul, life, whole being, with all high,

deep, partially developed capacities for happiness and blessedness,—then it is not in this world that satisfaction is possible. Earth might be bankrupt, and yet leave your soul, your inner immortal self, starving (Matt. xvi. 26).

I. THE SATISFACTION DESIRED AND EXPECTED—ardently desired and confidently expected (the Hebrew implies both; in the margin of the Revised Version, “Let me”). To behold God’s face in righteousness; to awake from the dream of life, from the sleep of death, to the *reality* of his presence, the sight of his unveiled glory. We are met here by one of those apparent contradictions in Scripture, which are always rich in deep meaning and instruction. On one hand, it is declared that to *see God* is impossible. He is “the King immortal, invisible” (1 Tim. i. 17; vi. 16). “God is a Spirit,” the Infinite Spirit; and how can spirit become visible to sense? On the other hand, our Saviour promises that “the pure in heart shall see God.” Of Moses it was said, “The similitude [or ‘form,’ ‘image,’—the same word as in the text] of the Lord shall he behold” (Numb. xii. 8). Issiah tells us how, in vision, he beheld the Lord on his throne (Isa. vi.). Ezekiel, Daniel, and St. John had similar visions. Visions, it is true; but visions that stood for that infinitely glorious *reality* of which the Lord said to Moses, “There shall be no man see me, and live” (Exod. xxxiii. 20). The explanation of this seeming contradiction is found in John i. 18. All those glorious manifestations, as well as the occasions on which a *Divine angel* appeared, as to Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, etc., who is identified with the *Lord*, we understand to have been manifestations of the Son of God, the everlasting Word, crowned and completed by the Incarnation (John i. 14). He is “the Image of the invisible God” (Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3). Thus this desire and expectation have for us as Christians a clearness and force they could not have for the holiest of the ancient believers. Even in the days of his flesh, the Lord could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” How much more in his glory! The Lord God and the Lamb are the light of the heavenly city. This does not exclude other manifestations of God as Spirit to our spirits; like that of which Christ speaks (John xiv. 23). Some have thought there is a *dead faculty* in our nature, by which we should have direct intuition of God; be naturally conscious of his presence, as we are of space and time. If so, this dead or sleeping sense, partially quickened by faith, shall awake; we shall *know*, consciously, what now we *believe*, that “in him we live, and move, and have our being.” Meantime, this is enough for faith to lay hold on, to rest in—we shall see Jesus our Lord in his glory. “To depart,” is, for the Christian, “to be with Christ;” “Absent from the body, at home with the Lord.” We shall “see him as he is;” “the Fulness of the Godhead bodily” dwelling in the immortal temple of glorified humanity. And in him we shall see the Father, and come to the Father. Our fellowship will be “with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Ambition cannot rise higher than this. Thought cannot *soar* beyond this. Faith, hope, love, cannot desire more than this.

“Then shall I see and hear and know  
All I desired or wish’d below.”

Divines have been wont to call this “the bestific vision,” *q.d.* the happy-making sight of God. But note that whatever be the forms of inconceivable glory in which God reveals himself to his children, the true satisfaction is in the *knowledge of God himself* (1 Cor. xiii. 12). As we look into the face and eyes of a friend to read his soul—thought, feeling, inner self—so the knowledge of God of which Christ says, “This is life eternal” (John xvii. 3), is of his character, holiness, truth, wisdom, infinite love to us.

II. THE GLORIOUS FULNESS AND PERFECTION OF THIS SATISFACTION. 1. The *end of the conflict* between faith and doubt. How many a soul has echoed Job’s cry (Job xxiii. 3, 8—10)! The life of faith is a wholesome discipline (John xx. 29; 1 Pet. i. 8). But who could bear to think that it would last for ever? 2. The consciousness of *perfect reconciliation to God*. No shadow of fear, any more than of doubt. 3. The experience of *complete likeness to our Saviour* (Col. iii. 10). This is the *point* of 1 John iii. 2. 4. The *perfect rest of the soul*. Hope is compared to the “anchor of the soul” (Heb. vi. 19). But the ship is still tossed on the surges (Heb. iv. 9). 5. The elevation of our being and life to the *highest pitch of love, knowledge, and joy*.

CONCLUSION. Turn this expectation and desire into a question, a heart-trying test—

*Shall I be thus satisfied?* Is my keenest desire tuned to this note? Will *this* satisfy me?—this and nothing else? The presence of Christ, perfect likeness to him, and eternal fellowship with him; to behold, without a veil, the glory of God in the face of Jesus; to know God? Believe it, no other heaven is promised or possible. If your life be not tending this way, you are misdirecting, misspending it.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1.—15.**—*The saint's appeal from the wrongs of earth to the Righteous One on the throne.* The title of our homily on this psalm is in some respects similar to that on the seventh psalm. There, however, the psalm is an appeal to the great Vindicator of one unjustly accused; here, it is the appeal of one beset with persecutors to the great Judge of all. Whenever or by whomsoever the words of this psalm were penned, it may not be easy to say. The probability is that it is one of David's.<sup>1</sup> If so, there is an abundance of incident in the record of his career by which it may be illustrated and explained. And, indeed, the surest (perhaps the only) way of interpreting such psalms as this is to read them by the light of the Books of Samuel. Anyway, however, it is an infinite mercy that we have preserved to us, not only psalms to be enjoyed at all times (such as the twenty-third and the forty-sixth), but others adapted for special times. For very often the saints of God have been so impeached, slandered, worried, beset, and persecuted, that the words of this psalm have exactly fitted their case. And in all such instances, the people of God may find sweet repose in reading the words before us; showing us, as they do, (1) that however greatly we may be wronged on earth, there is a Righteous One to whom we may make our final appeal; (2) that he who sitteth on the throne is not only just, but is also One of "marvellous loving-kindness;" (3) that therefore we may pour out our heart before him, and tell him our case—the whole of it, exactly as it is; so that, though we are by no means obliged to adopt as our own every word in psalms like this, yet we may learn from them to *present our case before God as minutely and exactly as the psalmists did theirs*,—as varied as are the cases, so varied may be the words.

I. **HERE IS A REMARKABLE CASE LAID BEFORE GOD.** There are in it six features. 1. *The writer is sorely and grievously persecuted.* (Vers. 9—12.) It has been well said, "Where would David's psalms have been, if he had not been persecuted?"<sup>2</sup> The experiences through which he passed may be studied in the records to which we have referred above. In fact, one of our most skilled expositors said to the writer that his own study of the Books of Samuel had thrown floods of light on the Psalms, had cleared up many phrases that before were unintelligible, and had shown the reason of many others that seemed unjustifiable. And since David was withal the poet of the sanctuary, he could and did put these hard experiences of his life in such words as should be helpful to the troubled and ill-treated saint in all future time. (For the exact significance of detailed expressions, see the Exposition.) Let believers follow David here, and whatever their cares and worries may be, let them tell them out, one by one, to their God, who will never misunderstand them, and, even if some expressions of emotion are unwise and faulty, will cover the faults with the mantle of his forgiving love, and fulfil the desires according to his own perfect wisdom. Oh, the *infinite* relief of having a Friend to whom we may safely tell *every* thing! 2. *David is conscious of his own integrity.* (Vers. 1—4.) This is by no means to be understood as a piece of self-righteousness (see Ps. cxliii. 2). It is quite consistent with the deepest humiliation before a holy and heart-searching God, that an upright man should avow his innocence of the guilt that false accusers may charge upon him. In fact, we ought, while penitent before our God for innumerable heart-sins, to be able to look our fellow-men in the face with the dignity of conscious honesty and purity. 3. *David knows there is a*

<sup>1</sup> The notes on Pss. xvi. and xvii. in 'The Cambridge Bible' (1891) should not be overlooked.

<sup>2</sup> See Mr. Fausset's *Horæ Psalmicæ*, 2nd edit., pp. 18, 25 (Nisbet); and 'The Life of David as reflected in his Psalms,' by Dr. Maclaren (Macniven and Wallace).

<sup>3</sup> Also several illustrative remarks in Spurgeon's 'Treasury,' *in loc.*

*Judge on the Throne, a Judge of perfect righteousness*—and One who will listen to his cry (ver. 7). He knows God as One who saves the trusting ones from their foes by his own omnipotent hand. 4. *Hence to him David makes his appeal.* (Ver. 2.) Note: Only one who is at peace with God, and who is among the upright in heart, could possibly make such an appeal as this,—for sentence to come forth from God's presence must be a terror to the rebel, for that sentence could only be one of condemnation. But souls in harmony with God can lovingly look to God as their Redeemer, their Goël, their Vindicator; they will say, with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" or with Cromwell, "I know that God is above all ill reports; and that he will in his own time vindicate me." Yes, they can call on God to do this, leaving in his hands the time and the way of doing it (cf. 1 John iii. 21, 22). 5. *With the appeal, David joins fervent supplication.* (1) With regard to his enemies. That God would arise, *i.e.* interpose in the way of providential aid; that he would cast down the wicked from their high pretensions, and disappoint them, *i.e.* prevent them—he beforehand with them, and frustrate their evil designs ere they attempt to carry them out. (2) With regard to himself. (a) That God would deliver him out of their hand. (b) That God would hold up his goings in the right way. (c) That God would keep him (a) as the apple of the eye (literally, "the little man," "the daughter of the eye")—an exquisitely beautiful figure, admirably adapted to be the basis of an address to the young on God's care in the structure of the eye; (b) as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings—another figure of marvellous tenderness<sup>1</sup> (Pss. xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1; lxi. 4; xci. 4; Matt. xxiii. 37). Nor let it be unnoticed that for all this, David uttered a "piercing cry" (for so the word in the first verse signifies). 6. *David remembers that, after all, he has no reason to envy his persecutors;* that, after all, it is far better to know God as his God, and to have him as a Refuge, than to have all the ease, comfort, and wealth which this world can give. And this brings us to note—

II. THAT, REMARKABLE AS THE PSALMIST'S CASE IS, IT PRESENTS TO US A STILL MORE REMARKABLE CONTRAST.<sup>2</sup> (Ver. 14.) How much force is there in the expression, "As for me" (cf. Ps. lv. 16)! Note: Amid all the confusion, strife, and whirl of earth, each man has a distinctive individuality, which is all his own, and is never confounded with another's (Gal. vi. 5; Isa. xl. 27). No one has a right to think he is lost in the crowd (2 Tim. ii. 19; Rev. ii. 17; Isa. xliii. 1; Luke xii. 6, 7). Each one has a relation to God entirely his own. The bad may mingle with the good, but are never confounded with them. Not one grain of wheat is by mistake cast into the fire, nor yet one of the tares gathered into the garner. All that is momentous in hope, character, relation, security, destiny, gathers round the individual. Each one has an "As for me." In the psalm before us there are indications of six points of difference between David and his enemies; so vital are they, that not all the distress which he suffers from them could make him desire to change places with them. 1. *He is right; they are in the wrong.* (Ver. 1.) As we have before said, the writer by no means claims to be perfect, but he knows that he has chosen the side of righteousness, and is sincerely anxious to walk according thereto; he walks in his integrity, though he may be conscious of coming far short of his own ideal. But as for his enemies, to be in the right is no concern of theirs! Their's is might against right. Note: Happy is the man who sees infinite honour in being right, however much it may cost him! 2. *God is to him a Defender; to them he is a Judge*—to condemn them and put them to shame. This is the ground-tone of the psalm. The throne of the great Eternal is to the psalmist one of grace, mercy, and love; but to his enemies, it appears to shoot forth devouring flame. Note: God will seem to us according to our state before him (see Ps. xviii. 25, 26). 3. *The psalmist addresses God in confident hope; they resist God, in proud defiance.* The whole attitude of David's enemies was one of proud self-confidence: "Our tongues are our own: who is Lord over us?" Hence: 4. *The throne of righteousness, which was the safety of David, was the peril of his persecutors.* His joy was their dread. Wicked

<sup>1</sup> See remarks of Hupfeld, Wordsworth, and Briggs, in Schaff's Lange, *in loc.*

<sup>2</sup> The structure of these verses is difficult. See notes thereon by Bishop Perowne and Mr. Briggs; and above all, the priceless treatise of John Howe, on 'The Blessedness of the Righteous,' which treats the last verse of this psalm with unapproached grandeur. Helpful and illustrative notes thereon will also be found in the edition of the Psalter published by the R.T.S. (1891).

men are afraid of God; and it is saddening to reflect that the guilt of an uneasy conscience projects its own dark shadow on the face of infinite love! 5. *David had an eternal portion in his God; they lived only for this life.* He calls them (ver. 14) "men of the world" (cf. Hebrew original). David could say, "Thou art my Portion, O God;" but with them their all was laid up here. When they depart hence, they will leave behind them all their treasures; but David would go, at death, to the enjoyment of his. Hence: 6. *The outlook of the psalmist was full of gladness; theirs, full of gloom.* How blissful the anticipation in the one case! (1) *A glorious vision.* "I shall behold thy face in righteousness." Whether the writer thought of a bodily vision of Jehovah's form, or of a spiritual vision of the invisible glory, we cannot say. At any rate, knowing even now the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we can forecast the ecstatic rapture which we shall feel when *he* shall be manifested, and we shall be like him, because we shall see him *as he is!* (2) *A glorious transformation.* "When I awake, with thy likeness," i.e. with possessing it (otherwise the phrase would be a tautology). As Watts beautifully puts it—

"I shall behold thy blissful face,  
And stand complete in righteousness."

(3) *Entire satisfaction therein*; i.e. both with the vision and with the conformation. Yes! There will be full and complete realization of the glory which now we see only "as through a glass darkly." And this will be *in the awakening* (cf. Ps. xlix. 14, "The upright . . . *in the morning*"). The state after death has been viewed in three aspects. (a) As a slumbrous state in the under-world, from which there was no awaking. This was the pagan view. (b) As a slumbrous state in the under-world, but with the hope of an awaking "in the morning." This was the Hebrew conception. (c) To the Christian, however, the state after death is—"Absent from the body, at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8, Revised Version). The glory, however, will be completed at the resurrection (Col. iii. 4, Revised Version). But how different the outlook of the wicked! (Matt. vii. 13, 14; Phil. iii. 19; Luke xvi. 22, 23; xii. 21; xiii. 28). Well may preachers plead agonizingly with their hearers to choose life rather than death (Heb. xi. 25, 26)! Little will the godly think of past sorrow when they have their recompense in heaven! Small comfort will earth's wealth give to those who miss heaven!—C.

Vers. 1—15.—*The righteousness of God's dealing.* It is a common saying that "the pillow is a good counsellor;" and there is much truth in this. In the quietness and retirement of night we are able to collect our thoughts and to commune with our own hearts, as to the past, the present, and the future. And if we do this in the spirit of the psalmist, realizing God's presence and relying upon him for counsel and guidance, it will be well. Whether this psalm was written at night or not, we cannot tell; but it contains truths fitted to soothe and comfort the soul in the night of trouble, and that mark the progress of the light from sunrise to the perfect day.

I. THAT GOD WILL HEAR THE RIGHT. This faith accords with the *intuitions of the heart*. We are sure that God must be on the side of right, for we feel that it is only when we are for the right that we are on the side of God. If we are true, much more must God be true. If we are just, much more must God be just. And this confidence is confirmed by *God's words and deeds* (vers. 4, 5). If it were otherwise, how could we trust God? and how could God govern and judge the world?

II. THAT GOD WILL DEFEND THE FAITHFUL. Perfect righteousness no man can claim. But as regards spirit and intention, and even as to actual conduct, some can plead integrity. Job could say, "Behold, my witness is in heaven" (Job xvi. 19). Samuel could appeal to Israel as to his uprightness, "Behold, here I am, witness against me, before the Lord, . . . whom have I defrauded, or whom have I oppressed?" (1 Sam. xii. 3). So David called Saul to witness to his innocence. "Moreover, my father, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee" (1 Sam. xxiv. 11). It is a great matter if we can thus approach God with a good conscience (1 John iii. 21). But our integrity, after all, is nothing to boast of. Before men, we may be innocent, but not before God. Our trust must therefore be, not in our own merits, but in God's mercy. God's loving-

kindness will shine forth in giving *protection and deliverance* (vers. 6—12) to those who love him and hope in his mercy. He will be their Refuge and Defence against every foe. With tender care and never-failing prayer, he will keep them from the evil.

**II. THAT GOD WILL DISAPPOINT THE PERSECUTOR, WHILE HE WILL ABUNDANTLY SATISFY THE DESIRES OF THE HUMBLE.** (Vers. 13—15.) When David was pursued by the forces of Saul, and in sore straits in the wilderness of Maon, God in a wonderful way brought him deliverance (1 Sam. xxiii. 25). So we may expect that God will meet the enemies of his people, front to front, and cast them down. There are marvellous deliverances wrought by God in behalf of his children (2 Pet. ii. 9; 2 Thess. i. 6—10). But God does far more than deliver—he satisfies. The heart is ever yearning after some unattained possession and enjoyment. “Man never *is*, but always *to be* blessed.” The children of this world have their desires, and, though they may so far be successful, though they may gain wealth, and have sons to bear their name and inherit their possessions, yet for all this they are not satisfied. Their blessings, through their own perversity, are turned to curses. But in bright contrast with these men of carnal minds, is the man who loveth God and worketh righteousness. “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”—W. F.

**Ver. 3.—*The visits of God in the night.*** The psalmist seems to have been one of the children of Israel scattered abroad. From the midst of a strange country he looks with a wistful eye towards the far-off land of his youth. Tried and persecuted by the worldly and profane, he takes refuge under the sheltering wings of Jehovah, his father's God. If he was not David, he has the spirit of David. There are foreshadowings and foregleams of gospel times, in the ideas as to “the world,” the “loving-kindness,” and saving power of the Lord; and the blessed hope of satisfaction in God. This verse leads us to consider the visits of God in the night.

**I. REFRESHMENT.** The divisions of time have to do with man (Gen. i. 5; Ps. civ. 20).

“God has set labour and rest,  
As day and night to men successive,  
And the timely dew of sleep.”

When night comes, it brings, not only relief from toil, but needed rest in sleep. In this we see the mercy of God. Like the sunshine and the rain, sleep is a common gift from God to men. Sleep also often brings return of health. How often is it said of some beloved one, with trembling hope, “If he sleep, he shall do well” (John xi. 12)!

**II. PROTECTION.** We associate the day with safety (John xi. 9). On the other hand, night is the season when not only wild beasts, but lawless men, seek their prey (Ps. civ. 20, 21; Job xxiv. 14—17; 1 Thess. iii. 7). There may be dangers unseen and unknown (Ps. xci. 5, 6). Besides, there are perils from evil thoughts and the wiles of the wicked one. But come what will, God is our sure Defence. He visits us in love and mercy. He watches over us with untiring vigilance (Ps. cxxi. 3). The angel of judgment may be abroad, but under the shelter of the blood of the covenant we are safe. Even though God should say, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee,” it will be in love, and not in wrath. Even should we be taken away in our sleep, it will be to light, and not to darkness. Hence we may say, “I will lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety” (Ps. iv. 8).

**III. INSTRUCTION.** God has access to us at all times. He speaks to us continually by day, when our ears are open; but he also speaks to us, as he sees cause, by night, in dreams and visions, and when he holds our souls waking. Of this we have many examples in the Bible, and who is there who has not had some knowledge of this in his own experience? Dreams and visions are, for the most part, vain things; but there are even dreams and visions that have been found to be visits of God and turning-points in life. But it is when we have hours of sleeplessness that precious opportunities occur of communing in our hearts with God. Then there is not only quietness, but solitude. We are alone with God, and if we recognize his presence and hearken to his Word, we shall have cause to say, with thankfulness, “Thou hast visited me in the

night." Sleeplessness, if prolonged, if it becomes a habit, is a sore evil; but sleepless hours may be turned to great profit. We have then the opportunity for quiet thought, for self-examination, for converse with God. Perhaps the past, with its joys and sorrows, rises before us, or we are troubled about the present or the future; but God is ever near, to counsel and to comfort us. "He giveth songs in the night" (Job xxxv. 10). "One practical lesson at least may be remembered as bearing on this subject—the duty of storing the mind, while we are yet comparatively young and strong, with that which, in the hours of sleeplessness and pain, will enable us to rise up to God. A mind well stored with Holy Scripture, with good prayers and hymns, need never feel that the waking hours of the night are lost. We may do more, for the soul's true sanctification and peace, than many others in their own brief earthly pilgrimage" (Canon Liddon).—W. F.

Ver. 15.—*Three awakings.* The Bible is a book of contrasts. Here we have a contrast between the man of God and "the men of the world." We may bring out something of its force and significance by considering the three awakings here suggested.

I. *THE AWAKING FROM SLEEP.* The psalmist says (ver. 3), "Thou hast visited me in the night." The sense of God's presence abides. When he awakes, it is not, like the worldling, to a life of selfish pleasure, but to a life of holy service. His first thought is not of self, but of God. His highest joy is in fellowship with God and in doing his work. His prayer is—

"Guard my first springs of thought and will,  
And with thyself my spirit fill."

II. *THE AWAKING FROM THE NIGHT OF TROUBLE.* Darkness is the image of gloom; light, of joy. "The men of the world" have few troubles, but they have fewer comforts. Their hope is in the things that perish. The godly man may be sorely tried (vers. 7—9), but he has "strong consolation." And even if gloom settles down upon him, it is but for a little, and when he awakes, thoughts that troubled him pass away as the visions of the night, and he rejoices in God's favour as in the light. Joy comes with the morning.

III. *THE AWAKING FROM THE SLEEP OF DEATH.* "Here we see right into the heart of the Old Testament faith." In life and death, God is all. Thus the soul rises to the hope of immortality. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." 1. *This awaking holds good of the whole being.* The spirit is first, but the body next. 2. *This awaking opens up a glorious vision.* There will be many and wondrous sights, but the first and chief of all will be God. "Thy face." So Moses (Numb. xii. 8); so believers (2 Cor. iii. 18). But here in a far higher way. 3. *This awaking will bring complete satisfaction.* Here we are never satisfied. This awaking into glory will first of all, and in the fullest sense of the word, bring satisfaction. "Thy likeness." Nothing less will satisfy. This is the hope of all our hoping. The joy of joys. "The rest that remaineth for the people of God." How grand must that possession be that will satisfy the soul, awakened to the highest life and the noblest aspirations! Not only will the redeemed be satisfied, but the Redeemer also. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." Study the awful contrast (Dan. xii. 2; Luke xvi. 25; John v. 28, 29).—W. F.

Vers. 1—5.—*The prayer of the righteous.* "In this psalm a servant of God, conscious of his own uprightness, and surrounded by enemies, prays to be kept from the evil world and from the evil men who persecute him, and then from the dark present looks forward with joy to the bright future." The first five verses are as the porch to the temple—the introduction to the main prayer of the psalm. The psalmist pleads with God—

I. *FOR THE RIGHTEOUS CAUSE.* (Vers. 1, 2.) God is righteous, therefore he must be on the side of justice and right. When we pray that liberty may prevail against slavery of mind or body, that justice may triumph over all injustice, that truth may overcome falsehood, that the spirit may be stronger than the flesh, and that religion may conquer all irreligion, we may be sure that we are praying according to the will of God, and may expect him to answer us.

II. **IN A RIGHTEOUS SPIRIT.** The prayer is offered by "lips without deceit," in all sincerity, without any hypocritical pretence. The truthfulness, righteousness, of his spirit are here pleaded as a ground for his being heard. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Integrity of mind is necessary to all true and successful prayer. He is in earnest about the righteous cause, and not making a pretence to it.

III. **ON THE GROUND OF A RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER.** (Ver. 3.) 1. *God had subjected him to close scrutiny in the night.* He had been divinely tested. "In the night," when good and evil thoughts spring up in greatest force, because of our freedom from outward occupation, and when the native bias discovers itself unchecked. Then God tries him, and does not find that his thoughts are dross, but gold. This is a bold statement, when put by the side of other statements, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity," etc. 2. *He keeps evil thoughts in subjection, even when they do arise.* They do not pass his mouth, do not find expression, but are held back from utterance. We cannot help evil thoughts, but we can help the utterance of them.

IV. **HE PLEADS ALSO RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT.** (Vers. 4, 5.) He has kept himself from the common doings of men, from the ways of the oppressor and destroyer. This is the *negative* side of his conduct; but it is a great virtue to resist the mass and run against the stream. The *positive* is that he had held fast in his doings to the Divine paths, and been steadfast in the right course. He has been constant, and steered by the heavenly pole-star.—S.

**Vers. 6—15.—Confidence in God.** From the first to the fifth verse the prayer bases his confidence in God on four pleas. 1. He prays for the righteous cause. 2. In a righteous spirit. 3. On the ground of a righteous character. 4. On the ground of righteous conduct. Now we come to other grounds upon which he urges God to save him.

I. **THE COMPASSION OF GOD FOR THOSE WHO URGENTLY CRY TO HIM.** (Vers. 6, 7.) He calls, because God answers him; and now he calls for a special exercise of mercy, because God saves those who find their refuge or safety in him. He was pleading according to the law of God's nature, and had, therefore, a Divine warrant for his prayer: "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."

II. **HIS IMMINENT DANGER.** (Vers. 7, 9, 11, 12.) His enemies were the enemies of God (ver. 7). They would destroy him (ver. 9). They haunted his footsteps everywhere (ver. 11). He prays, therefore, to be protected as the pupil of the eye is protected, as if he could not be kept secure enough; and to be hidden under the shadow of the Divine wings, where no danger could reach him (Deut. xxxii. 10, 11).

III. **THE WICKEDNESS OF HIS ADVERSARIES.** 1. *Their want of sympathy and their hard pride.* (Ver. 10.) "Enclosed in fat" is equivalent to "have become gross and unfeeling." 2. *They were bent on the ruin of others as well as themselves.* (Ver. 11.) 3. *They were fierce and furious in their wicked efforts.* (Ver. 12.) Like a greedy lion, like a young vigorous lion lurking in his lair.

IV. **THEY WERE MEN WHO SOUGHT THEIR PORTION IN THIS PASSING LIFE; WHILE HE SOUGHT HIS IN GOD.** (Vers. 13—15.) 1. They were *satisfied with the treasures of this world.* With children and worldly substance, and were not worthy, therefore, to triumph over the righteous cause and the righteous persons. Deliver me from such worldlings. 2. *He was seeking after the highest good.* (Ver. 15.) "In righteousness let me behold thy face; let me be satisfied, when I awake, with thine image." An echo of the eleventh verse of the previous psalm, which reveals his trust in a future life. "There is an allusion probably to such a manifestation of God as that made to Moses (Numb. xii. 8), where God declares that with Moses he will speak "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude [rather, 'form,' the same word as here] of Jehovah shall he behold."—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XVIII.

THIS psalm has many characteristics which distinguish it, not only from all that have preceded it in the collection, but from all

those which are assigned to David by their titles. In the first place, it is the longest of such psalms, extending, as it does, to fifty verses, or a hundred and fourteen lines of Hebrew poetry. Next, it is continuous,



not broken into strophes (Hengstenberg). Thirdly, it appears, not only in the Psalter, but also in one of the historical books—the Second Book of Samuel, in what seems to be a second edition. Further, it is in itself a very remarkable composition, being distinguished alike by “vigour and grace; full of archaic grandeur, and yet free from abrupt transitions and thoughts labouring for utterance, such as make some of the earlier psalms difficult to understand” (“Speaker’s Commentary”). Hitzig calls it “an unrivalled production of art and reflection.”

The authorship of David is generally allowed, and indeed has been questioned only by three recent critics—Olshausen, Von Lengerke, and Professor Cheyne. The period at which it was written is declared in the title to be “when the Lord had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul”—a date which is quite in accord with the contents of the poem. For while it celebrates his deliverance from perils of various kinds—from a “strong enemy” (ver. 17), from a “flood of ungodly men” (ver. 4), from the near approach of death (vers. 4, 5), and from a host of foreign enemies (vers. 29—43)—there is no allusion in it to domestic foes, and no indication of remorse for any special sin. The exact time cannot be fixed; but it was probably soon after the series of victories described in 2 Sam. x., and before the events recorded in 2 Sam. xi. and xii.

It is thought, with some reason, that the psalm was composed for a great occasion of public thanksgiving. Most likely it was processional, and therefore not broken into strophes, but continuous. Still, we may trace in it, (1) an introduction, or prologue (vers. 1—3), which is an ascription of praise; (2) a central mass, chiefly in a narrative form (vers. 4—45), recounting God’s goodness; and (3) a conclusion, or epilogue (vers. 46—50), which is mainly thanksgiving. The central mass is further broken up by the interposition into the narrative of a passage (vers. 19—27) declaring the grounds of the favour and protection which God had extended to the psalmist, and, so far, “setting forth the subjective principles on which the Lord imparts his aid” to his servants (Hengstenberg).

Ver. 1.—*I will love thee, O Lord, my Strength.* This opening is very remarkable. The verb translated “I will love” expresses the very tenderest affection, and is elsewhere never used to denote the love of man towards God, but only that of God towards man. The entire verse, moreover, is withdrawn from the “second edition” of the psalm (2 Sam. xxii.)—which was perhaps prepared for liturgical use—as too sacred and too private to suit a public occasion.

Ver. 2.—*The Lord is my Rock; or, my Cliff—my Sela*—an expression used commonly of Petra. And my Fortress (comp. Ps. cxliv. 2). Not only a natural stronghold, but one made additionally strong by art. And my Deliverer. A living Protector, not a mere inanimate defence. My God, my Strength; rather, *my Rock*, as the same word (*tsur*) is translated in Exod. xvii. 6; xxxiii. 21, 22; Dent. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 31; 1 Sam. ii. 2; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3; Isa. xxvi. 4. It is the word from which the strong city, Tyre, derived its name. In whom I will trust (comp. Dent. xxxii. 37). My Buckler (comp. Gen. xv. 1, where God announced himself as Abraham’s “Shield;” and see also Dent. xxxiii. 29; Pss. iii. 2; v. 12; lxxxiv. 11; cxix. 114; cxliv. 2). The Horn also of my salvation (comp. Luke i. 69). The horn is the emblem at once of strength and of dignity. A “horn of salvation” is a source of excellency and might, whence “salvation” or deliverance comes to those who trust in it. And my high Tower (comp. Ps. ix. 9, with the comment *ad loc.*). It is remarked that God, in this passage, receives seven epithets, “the mystic number which in sacred things symbolizes perfection” (Delitzsch).

Ver. 3.—*I will call upon the Lord*, who is worthy to be praised. Not so much a simple future, “I will call upon the Lord at some particular time,” as a future of continuance, “I call, and will ever call, upon the Lord, worthy to be praised;” and so—*i.e.* so long as I call—shall I be saved from mine enemies (comp. Pss. v. 10, 12; vi. 8—10; x. 15, 16, etc.).

Ver. 4.—*The sorrows of death compassed me.* Here begins the narrative of David’s sufferings in the past. “The sorrows”—or rather, “the cords”—of death,” he says, “encompassed me,” or “coiled around me” (Kay). Death is represented as a hunter, who goes out with nets and cords, encompassing his victims and driving them into the toils. David’s recollection is probably of the time when he was “hunted upon the mountains” by Saul (1 Sam. xxvi. 20), and expected continually to be caught and put to death (1 Sam. xix. 1; xxiii. 15; xxvii. 1). And the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; literally, *the torrents of Belial*, or

of ungodliness. The LXX. have *χέλαιβοι ἀνέμοι*. Streams of ungodly men, the myrmidons of Saul, cut him off from escape.

Ver. 5.—The sorrows of hell compassed me about; literally, *the cords of Sheol*, or Hades. Death and Hell are, both of them, personified, and made to join in the chase. The ensnaring nets are drawn nearer and nearer; at last the toils close in, the last cast is made, and the prey is taken. The snares of death prevented me; or, *came upon me* (Revised Version)—“took me by surprise” (Kay).

Ver. 6.—In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God. At this supreme moment, when he is entangled in the snares, and on the point of being slain, the psalmist represents himself as invoking the aid of the Almighty. As Hengstenberg notes, “While the manifold distresses are united in the beginning of the verse into one great ‘distress,’ so the manifold Divine hearings and helps are united into a single grand hearing and help”—and, we may add, the manifold cries into one great cry. He heard my voice out of his temple; i.e. his tabernacle, since the temple was not yet built (comp. Pss. v. 7; xi. 4); or perhaps, “out of heaven” (Cheyne). And my cry came before him, even into his ears (comp. Exod. ii. 23, where the same word is used for the “cry” of the children of Israel in Egypt).

Ver. 7.—Then the earth shook and trembled; or, *quailed and quaked* (Kay, who thus expresses the assonance of the Hebrew *vai-tig’ash vai-tir’ash*). The psalmist must not be understood literally. He does not mean that the deliverance came by earthquake, storm, and thunder, but describes the discomfiture and dismay of his opponents by a series of highly poetical images. In these he, no doubt, follows nature closely, and probably describes what he had seen, heard, and felt. The foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken. In violent earthquakes, the earth seems to rock to its foundations; mountain ranges are sometimes actually elevated to a height of several feet; rocks topple down; and occasionally there are earth-slips of enormous dimensions. Because he was wroth. God’s anger against the psalmist’s enemies produced the entire disturbance which he is describing.

Ver. 8.—There went up a smoke out of his nostrils. Emissions of smoke are a common feature of volcanic disturbances, with which earthquakes are closely connected. The LXX. give, instead of “out of his nostrils,” *in his anger* (*ἐν ὀργῇ αὐτοῦ*), which is better, since the Hebrew prefix *א*, “in,” certainly cannot mean “out of.” And fire out of his mouth devoured. Fire-balls are said to have accompanied some earthquakes, as especially that one by which Julian’s design of

rebuilding Jerusalem was frustrated. Coals were kindled by it. The fire-balls above spoken of are declared to have scorched and burnt the workmen employed by Julian (Amm. Maro., xxiii. 1).

Ver. 9.—He bowed the heavens also, and came down (comp. Ps. cxliv. 5). In a storm the clouds do actually descend, and the whole heaven seems to be bowed down to earth. God is said to “come down” to earth whenever he delivers the oppressed, and takes vengeance on their oppressors (see Exod. iii. 8; 2 Sam. xxii. 10; Ps. cxliv. 5; Isa. lxiv. 1, 3, etc.). And darkness was under his feet. A deep darkness commonly accompanies both earthquake and storm. When God actually descended on Mount Sinai, it was amid thunders and lightnings, and “a thick cloud” (Exod. xix. 16), elsewhere called “thick darkness” (Deut. v. 22).

Ver. 10.—And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly. The imagery here transcends all experience, and scarcely admits of comment or explanation. God is represented as borne through the heavens, as he proceeds to execute his purposes, by the highest of his creatures, the cherubim. Elsewhere (Ps. civ. 3) he sails through the sky supported on clouds. Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind; rather, *he sped swiftly* (Kay). The verb used is different from that translated “did fly” in the preceding verse. It is applied elsewhere especially to the eagle (Deut. xxxviii. 49; Jer. xlviii. 40; xlix. 22).

Ver. 11.—He made darkness his secret place; i.e. he hid himself amid clouds and thick darkness. In executing his judgments he did not allow himself to be seen. God’s action is always secret and inscrutable. His pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. The original runs as follows: “He made darkness his secret place—his pavilion round about him—dark waters, thick clouds of the skies.” The whole forms one sentence, “his pavilion” being in apposition with “secret place,” and the last clause, “dark waters, thick clouds of the skies,” being exegetical of the “darkness” in the first clause. God’s “pavilion,” or “tent” (מִכְבָּד), is mentioned again in Pss. xxvii. 5 and xxxi. 20.

Ver. 12.—At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed. The “brightness” intended is probably that of lightning. The “thick clouds” are riven and parted asunder for the lightning to burst forth. Then come, almost simultaneously, hail stones and coals of fire; i.e. hail like that which fell in Egypt before the Exodus (Exod. ix. 22–34), when “there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail” (ver. 24)—a fire which “ran along upon the

ground," or some very unusual electrical phenomenon (see the comment on Exodus in the 'Homiletic Commentary,' p. 208).

Ver. 13.—The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice. With the lightning came, necessarily, thunder, rolling along the heavens, and seeming like the voice of God (comp. Job xxxviii. 4, 5). Hail stones and coals of fire. The phrase is repeated for the sake of emphasis. The hail and the lightning are represented as conjointly the ministers of the Divine vengeance.

Ver. 14.—Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them. God's "arrows" are often spoken of. Job felt them within him (Job vi. 4). David has already said of them, that they are "ordained against the persecutors" (Ps. vii. 13). We may understand by the expression any sharp pain, mental or bodily, which God sends. And he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. The effect of the tempest of God's wrath is to "scatter" and "discomfit" the enemy (comp. Exod. xiv. 24). Instead of "and he shot out lightnings," our Revisers give, *and lightnings manifold*, which is perhaps better.

Ver. 15.—Then the channels of waters were seen. By "the channels of waters" seem to be meant the torrent-courses, so common in Palestine, especially on either side of Jordan, which convey into it the winter rains. These "were seen," lit up by the "lightnings manifold," having previously been in darkness (see vers. 9—11). At the same time, the foundations of the world were discovered. The earthquake (ver. 7) still continuing, the earth gaped in places, and the glare of the lightning enabled the eye to penetrate deep into the solid globe—so deep that it seemed to reach the "foundations." At thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils (comp. ver. 7, "because he was wroth").

Ver. 16.—He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. While destruction thus came upon David's enemies (vers. 12—14), God's protecting hand was stretched out to save David himself, who was carefully "taken" and tenderly "drawn" forth from among the "many waters," i.e. the dangers and difficulties which threatened him. Some commentators see in the words used—"he sent, he took me, he drew me"—a tacit reference to Exod. ii. 5, 10, and, by implication, a sort of parallel between the deliverance of David from his foes and that of Moses from the waters of the Nile (Kay, Hengstenberg, 'Speaker's Commentary').

Ver. 17.—He delivered me from my strong

enemy. This is generally understood of Saul. By the defeat of Gilboa, and its consequences (1 Sam. xxxi. 1—4), God delivered David from the peril of death which hung over him so long as Saul lived. And from them which hated me. David's enemies among the courtiers of Saul were powerless without their master. Many, probably, fell in the battle; the rest sank into obscurity. For they were too strong for me. I must have succumbed to them had not God helped me.

Ver. 18.—They prevented me in the day of my calamity (comp. 1 Sam. xxiii. 13—15; xxiv. 1—3; xxvi. 1—4, etc.). But the Lord was my Stay. God frustrated all the designs of David's foes, and prevented him from falling into their hands.

Ver. 19.—He brought me forth also into a large place (comp. Ps. xxxi. 8; cxviii. 5). By "a large place" is probably meant open ground, not encompassed by snares, or nets, or enemies in ambush. He delivered me, because he delighted in me. David now proceeds to explain the grounds of God's favour towards him. He begins by summing up all in a word, "God *delighted* in him." He then goes on to explain the causes of God's "delight" (vers. 20—26).

Ver. 20.—The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness. David has spoken of his "righteousness" already in Ps. vii. 8. We must not suppose him to mean absolute blamelessness, any more than Job means such blamelessness by his "integrity" (Job xxvii. 5; xxxi. 6). He means honesty of purpose, the sincere endeavour to do right, such conduct as brings about "the answer of a good conscience before God" (1 Pet. iii. 21). According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me (comp. Job xxvii. 9; Ps. xxiv. 4). "Clean hands" are hands unstained by any wicked action.

Ver. 21.—For I have kept the ways of the Lord. Compare the statement of the young man whom Jesus "looked upon and loved" (Mark x. 21), "All these commandments have I observed from my youth" (ver. 20). And have not wickedly departed from my God. It is observed that the word translated by "departed wickedly" implies "wifely and persistent wickedness" ('Speaker's Commentary')—"an entire alienation from God" (Calvin). Not even in the humblest of the penitential psalms, when David is bewailing his great offence, does he use this verb of himself. He is an example to all men not to indulge in a false humility, nor employ phrases concerning himself which go beyond the truth.

Ver. 22.—For all his judgments were before me; i.e. "all his commandments" (compare the use of the same word (קִשְׁרוֹת) throughout the hundred and nineteenth

psalm). And I did not put away his statutes from me. The wicked are said to "cast God's commandments behind their back" (1 Kings xiv. 9; Neh. ix. 26; Ps. l. 17; Ezek. xxiii. 35). David declares that he had never so acted; he had kept God's statutes always well before him, had borne them in mind, and given heed to them.

Ver. 23.—I was also upright before him (compare what is said of David in 1 Kings xi. 4; xiv. 8; xv. 5). Like Job, he was "perfect and upright"—"one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job i. 1). And I kept myself from mine iniquity; *i.e.* "from the sin to which I was especially tempted." (Kay compares the *ἐνεπείραστος ἀμαρτία* of Heb. xii. 1.) But what sin this was, we have no means of determining. All that appears is that David had an inclination to some particular form of sin, against which he found it necessary to be continually upon his guard.

Ver. 24.—Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight. Having set forth the particulars of his righteousness (vers. 21—23), the psalmist returns to his previous general statement (ver. 20), and emphatically reaffirms it.

Vers. 25—28.—A short didactic digression is here interposed, extending the principles on which God has dealt with David and his enemies, to mankind generally (vers. 25—27); after which a return is made to God's special dealings with David (ver. 28).

Ver. 25.—With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful. The main principle is that God will act towards men as they act towards him. If they are kindly, gracious, loving towards him—for this is what the word *chasid* means—he will be kindly, gracious, loving towards them, and *vice versa*, as explained in vers. 26, 27. With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; or, a *perfect man* (Revised Version). The word is the same as that used in Ps. iv. 3; xii. 1; xxxi. 23; xxxii. 6; xxxvii. 28, etc., and generally translated "godly," or, in the plural, "saints."

Ver. 26.—With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward; rather, *thou wilt show thyself adverse*. The same root is not here used for the verb as for the adjective, as is done in the three preceding clauses. The reason is well explained in the 'Speaker's Commentary': "In dealing with the good, God shows his approval by manifesting attributes similar or identical in essence; in dealing with the wicked, he exhibits

attributes which are correlative—in just proportion to their acts," but not identical. God cannot "show himself froward"—he can only show himself opposed, antagonistic, an adversary. What the psalmist means to say is that, if men oppose and thwart God, he in return will oppose and thwart them. But they will act in a perverse spirit, he in a spirit of justice and righteousness.

Ver. 27.—For thou wilt save the afflicted people; *i.e.* the oppressed and down-trodden, who are assumed to be pious and God-fearing (comp. Ps. x. 12—14; xi. 2, etc.). But wilt bring down high looks (comp. Ps. ci. 5 and Prov. vi. 17). The *fact* of "pride going before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," was noticed by the heathen of the ancient world, no less than by the "peculiar people." And both alike attributed the downfall of the proud to God. "Seest thou," says Herodotus, "how God with his lightning smites always the bigger animals, and will not suffer them to wax insolent, while those of a lesser bulk chafe him not? How likewise his bolts ever fall on the highest houses and the tallest trees? So plainly does he love to bring down everything that exalts itself. Thus oftentimes a mighty host is discomfited by a few men, when God in his jealousy sends panic or storm from heaven, and they perish in a way unworthy of them. For God allows no one to have high thoughts but himself" (vii. 10, § 5). But the heathen seem to have imagined that God envied the proud ones, and therefore cast them down.

Vers. 28—45.—As in the former narrative section (vers. 4—24) David seems to have had his earlier troubles in mind, so, in the present one, his troubles since he entered upon the kingdom seem especially to engage his thoughts. These consisted chiefly of wars with foreign enemies, in which, while he incurred many dangers, he was, upon the whole, eminently successful.

Ver. 28.—For thou wilt light my candle; rather, *my lamp*—the word generally used of the lamps supported by the seven-branched candelabrum of the tabernacle (see Exod. xxv. 37; xxxvii. 22, 23; xl. 25). David himself is called "the lamp of Israel" in 2 Sam. xxi. 17. The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. The true lamp of David, which "enlightened his darkness," was "the light of God's countenance." While this shone upon him, his whole path was bright, and he himself, reflecting the Divine rays, was a lamp to others.

Ver. 29.—For by thee I have run through

a troop. The military key-note is at once struck. *Gedûd* (גִּדּוּד) is a marauding band of light-armed troops sent out to plunder an enemy's country. David "ran through" such a "troop," when he pursued and defeated the Amalekites who had plundered and burnt Ziklag (1 Sam. xxx. 17). It is called three times a *gedûd* (vers. 8 and 15 twice). And by my God have I leaped over a wall. *Shur* (שׁוּר) is a rare word for "wall," occurring in the Hebrew text only here and in Gen. xlix. 22, though used also of the walls of Jerusalem in the Chaldee of Ezra (iv. 12, 13, 16). It may designate the walls of Jerusalem in this place, and David may intend to allude to his conquest of the stronghold of Zion from the Jebusites (2 Sam. v. 6, 7).

Ver. 30.—As for God, his way is perfect (comp. Deut. xxxii. 4, "His work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment"). What God does, he does effectually; he does not have recourse to half-measures. The word of the Lord is tried; i.e. the promises of God are sure, they have been tested, and tried as by fire, and will never fail. He is a Buckler to all those that trust in him (comp. ver. 2).

Ver. 31.—For who is God save the Lord? (see Exod. xx. 3; Deut. xxxii. 39). As the one and only God, absolute confidence may be placed in Jehovah, who is able to protect and preserve to the uttermost all who serve him (comp. 2 Sam. vii. 22—29). Or who is a Rock save our God? (comp. ver. 2; and see also Deut. xxxii. 4, 18, 30, 31; and Ps. lxi. 2).

Ver. 32.—It is God that girdeth me with strength (comp. ver. 39). And maketh my way perfect. Keeps me, i.e. in the right way—the way of his commandments.

Ver. 33.—He maketh my feet like hinds' feet (comp. 2 Sam. ii. 18; 1 Chron. xii. 8; Hab. iii. 19). The Israelites reckoned swiftness of foot, agility, and endurance among the highest of warlike qualities. These qualities were needed especially in the pursuit of defeated enemies; and the rapidity of David's conquests (2 Sam. v. 6—10; viii. 1—14; x. 15—20) must be ascribed to them mainly. And setteth me upon my high places; i.e. establishes me in the strongholds that command my extensive territory, and give me secure possession of it, as Zion, Rabbath-Ammon, Damascus, Petra, perhaps Zobah, Rehob, and others.

Ver. 34.—He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms (comp. Ps. cxliv. 1). "A bow of steel" is a mistranslation, since *neshûsha* (נֶשֶׁשָׁא) is not "steel," but "brass," or rather "bronze"—and bows of steel were unknown to the ancients. Compare the comment on Job xx. 24 ('Homiletic Commentary,' p. 342).

Ver. 35.—Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation; i.e. in battle thou extendest over me the shield of thy protection. Nothing was more common in ancient warfare than for a warrior, while he was engaged in using his offensive weapons, especially the bow, to be protected from the missiles of the enemy by a comrade who held a shield before him. The Assyrian kings were constantly thus defended in battle, and it was even common for an ordinary archer to be similarly guarded (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 30, 32, 33, for illustrations). And thy right hand hath holden me up. The "right hand" is always spoken of as the arm of greatest strength (comp. Ps. xlv. 3; xlv. 4; xlviii. 10; lx. 5, etc.). And thy gentleness hath made me great; rather, *thy condescension* (Kay)—the quality in God which most nearly corresponds to humility in man. The word is not elsewhere used of God.

Ver. 36.—Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. Job often complained that God "hedged in his steps" (iii. 23) and "fenced up his way" (xix. 5), so that he had no liberty of movement. David enumerates among the blessings which he receives of God, the freedom which he enjoys (comp. Ps. xxxi. 8). He is at liberty to go where he likes, and also his footsteps "do not slip." This is rather an independent clause than a consequence. Translate, *and my ankles slip not*.

Ver. 37.—I have pursued mine enemies and overtaken them (see 1 Sam. xxx. 8—17; 2 Sam. viii. 1—13; x. 6—18). Neither did I turn again till they were consumed. The greatest severities exercised by David seem to have been those against Edom (1 Kings xi. 15, 16) and Ammon (2 Sam. xii. 29—31). Otherwise he would seem not to have used, with any great harshness, his rights as a conqueror.

Ver. 38.—I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. It is remarkable that the nations which David subdued scarcely ever, while he lived, rose up again in revolt.

Ver. 39.—For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle. Having boasted of his own actions during the space of two verses (vers. 37, 38), David falls back upon his habitual acknowledgments, that all which he has done has been done wholly through the strength of the Divine arm, which has upheld him, sustained him, and given him the victory. Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me; rather, *thou hast bowed down mine adversaries under me* (Hengstenberg, Kay, Cheyne).

Ver. 40.—Thou hast also given me the

necks of mine enemies; i.e. "thou hast made them turn their backs upon me in flight" (comp. Exod. xxiii. 27, where the same expression is used). That I might destroy them that hate me. David must not be supposed to speak from personal animosity. He expresses himself as the king of God's people, bound to do his utmost to protect them, and to deliver them from the enemies who "hate" him only because he is the leader and champion of his countrymen. The neighbouring nations in David's time seem to have been bent on the total extirpation of the Hebrew people.

Ver. 41.—They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. It seems strange, at first sight, that the heathen enemies of David should "cry unto the Lord," i.e. to Jehovah; and hence some have been driven to suppose that a victory over domestic enemies is here interpolated into the series of foreign victories. But it seems better to explain, with Hengstenberg and the 'Speaker's Commentary,' that the heathen did sometimes, as a last resort, pray to a foreign god, whom they seemed to find by experience to be more powerful than their own (see Jonah i. 14). Jehovah was known by name, as the God of the Israelites, to the surrounding nations. Meaha mentions him upon the Moabite Stone; and Sennacherib declared, by the mouth of Rabahakeh, "Am I come up without the Lord against this place to destroy it? The Lord (Jehovah) said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it" (2 Kings xviii. 25).

Ver. 42.—Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind (comp. Ps. xxxv. 5). The enemy were beaten and dispersed so that they seemed driven as dust before the wind. I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. They were made no account of, treated with as little ceremony as the clay in the streets. Language of utter contempt.

Ver. 43.—Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people. David now approaches his conclusion. In one verse he at once sums up his past deliverances and anticipates fresh glories. God has delivered him from the strivings of those who were hostile to him among his own people (see vers. 4—18), and has also given him victory over the heathen. In the future he will do even more. And thou hast made me the head of the heathen. The antithesis between "people" (עַם) and "heathen," or "nations" (גוֹיִם), is unmistakable. The long series of David's victories have made him "head" over the latter. This is less clearly seen in the history of David's reign than in the description given of the state of the kingdom inherited from

David by Solomon (1 Kings iv. 21, 24). A people whom I have not known shall serve me. It is not clear that this was ever fulfilled literally in the person of David, and we are entitled to explain it as a Messianic prophecy, parallel with that of Ps. ii. 8.

Ver. 44.—As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me; literally, *at the hearing of the ear*. But the meaning is that given in the Authorized Version. The words aptly describe the conversion of the Gentiles (see Acts x. 34—48; xiii. 48; xvii. 11; xviii. 8, etc.). The strangers shall submit themselves unto me; literally, *the sons of the stranger shall pay court to me*—not necessarily a false court, as Hengstenberg and others suppose, but, as Dr. Kay explains, an "obsequious and servile homage."

Ver. 45.—The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. Converts are represented as coming into the Church, not merely from love, but partly from fear. The kingdom of the Redeemer at once attracts and alarms. So Isaiah says, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. . . . The sons also of them that afflict thee shall come kneeling unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet, and they shall call thee, The city of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. lx. 12—14; see also Micah vii. 16, 17).

Vers. 46—50.—This glorious and triumphant psalm concludes with a solemn ascription of praise, blessing, and thanksgiving to Almighty God—partly recapitulation of what has preceded (vers. 47, 48), partly additional (vers. 46, 49, 50). Terms of praise are accumulated, and the whole is made to culminate in a Messianic burst, where David is swallowed up in his "Seed;" and the "Anointed King" presented to our view is rather the antitype than the type—rather Christ Jesus than the son of Jesse.

Ver. 46.—The Lord liveth. God was known to Israel as "the living God" from the time of Moses (Deut. v. 26). The epithet exalted him above all other so-called gods, who were not living (comp. 2 Kings xix. 4; Isa. xxxvii. 4, 17; Dan. vi. 26). But it had also a very precious, absolute meaning. God's life was the source of man's. It was through God (who had life in himself) breathing into man the breath of life that man became a living soul (Gen. ii. 7). Hence "the living God" (Ps. xlii. 2) is "the God of our life" (Ps. xlii. 8). And blessed be my Rock (see vers. 1, 31). In blessing "his Rock," David blesses God for his qualities of firmness, steadfast-

ness, and trustworthiness. And let the God of my salvation be exalted. "The God of my salvation" is a favourite phrase with David (see Pss. xxv. 5; xxvii. 9; xxxviii. 22; li. 14; lxxxviii. 1). Other writers use it rarely. When David prays that the God of his salvation (i.e. the God who continually saves him and preserves him) may be "exalted," he probably desires that he may be praised and honoured of all men.

Ver. 47.—It is God that avengeth me; rather, *even the God avengeth me* (comp. vers. 3, 6, 14, 17, etc.). And subdueth the people under me; rather, *the peoples*; i.e. the nations (comp. vers. 37—42).

Ver. 48.—He delivereth me from mine enemies. The "deliverance" was especially from domestic foes (see vers. 17, 19). His foreign foes seem never to have brought David into much peril. Yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me. The "lifting up" was above enemies of both kinds (see ver. 43). Thou hast delivered me from the violent man (comp. ver. 17). There is no reason to doubt that in both places Saul is intended. He was at once David's "enemy," and a "man of violence." Were the question open otherwise, it would be closed by the statement in the title.

Ver. 49.—Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen. As, in some sense, "the head of the heathen" (ver. 43), David was bound to offer prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving "among

them," if it were only to teach them by his example, and lead them on towards the worship of the true God. And sing praises unto thy Name; i.e. to thy Person—God being in his Name.

Ver. 50.—Great deliverance giveth he to his king; literally, *he magnifies salutations to his king*. The primary reference seems to be to the gracious message which God sent to David by Nathan when he had brought the tabernacle into Jerusalem, and purposed to build a "house" worthy of it (see 2 Sam. vii. 8—16). God had then "saluted" David as "his servant" (ver. 5), and sent him a message of the most gracious character, even promising the kingdom to him and to his seed "for ever" (vers. 13, 16). And sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David. No doubt David is primarily intended, both by the "king" of the first clause, and by the "anointed" of the second; but the combination of the two, and the immediate mention of the "seed" which is to reign "for ever," carry the passage beyond the psalmist individually, and give to the conclusion of the psalm, at any rate, a semi-Messianic character. As Hengstenberg says, "Psalms of this kind are distinguished from those which may more strictly be called Messianic, only by this—that in the latter the Messiah *exclusively* is brought into view, while here he is presented to our notice only as a member of the seed of David" ('Commentary on the Psalms,' vol. i. p. 324, Engl. trans.).

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 25, 26.—*God's revelation of himself is suited to man's capacity.* "With the merciful," etc. We see what we have eyes to see; hear what we have ears to hear; feel what we have capacity to feel. Suppose four listeners to the same piece of music. To one, with a critical ear, it is a rendering, good or ill, of the musician's composition; to a second, a strain of national music; to a third, full of memories of childhood; to a fourth, who has no ear for music, a tedious noise. Suppose a group watching a lamb skipping in a field. One is a painter; another, a naturalist, another, a shepherd; another, a butcher. Each sees something the rest cannot see. Perhaps a simple Christian coming by sees what none of them perceives—a reminder of the good Shepherd, who gathers the lambs in his arms. As in outward things, so in spiritual. As with bodily sight, hearing, feeling, so with spiritual perception. He that has eyes will see. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Therefore the lesson of the text is a great and widely applicable truth—*God's revelation of himself is suited to men's spiritual capacity.* Different souls get different views of God.

I. THIS IS TRUE OF GOD'S DEALINGS. 1. *They appear different to different eyes.* Visit two homes, perhaps in the same street, in which there is similar trouble—sickness, or bereavement, or failure in business, or sore poverty. In one, all is gloom, repining, comfortless perplexity. In the other, there is light in the darkness, a rainbow on the storm. To one sufferer God's ways are hard, dark, mysterious; he is even ready to think them unjust. The other says, "I could not bear it in my own strength, but the Lord stands by me and strengthens me. God's will must be right. He cannot make mistakes or be unfaithful. He is my Refuge and Strength." So with God's government of the world and general providence. One mind fastens on the pain, sorrow

calamity, which every hour records—pestilence, earthquake, tempest, and so forth. Another sees that the *universal design and general working* of all natural laws is for good and happiness, not evil; that the main part of human suffering has its root in sin; that “the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord;” and trusts God for the rest. 2. God’s dealings not only *appear* different; *they are and must be different*, according to the temper and attitude of our souls. To the soul that bows under God’s hand, trusts his Word, clings closer to him in trial, it is “chastening”—full of mercy, rich in result (Heb. xii. 6, etc.). The proud, stubborn heart, that resents and rebels against affliction, is hardened by it, like Pharaoh.

II. IT IS SO WITH GOD’S WORD. Come to the Scriptures in a cavilling, critical, hostile spirit, and they will teem with difficulties. Read them carelessly, scornfully; they will be dull and lifeless. Search them, with an earnest desire to know the truth, with prayer for the Holy Spirit’s teaching, with candour and humility; they will “talk with thee” (Prov. vi. 22), and unfold their secrets. Thou shalt hear God’s own voice speaking to thy soul; and find what the Thessalonians found (1 Thess. ii. 13).

III. SO IT WAS WITH OUR LORD JESUS. Isaiah’s prediction was fulfilled (Isa. liii. 2, 3). Scrupulously religious persons, but blinded by self-righteousness, could no more see his glory than sceptics, hypocrites, or scoffing triflers (Matt. xiii. 14, 15). But his disciples—those who first believed on him, and then lived in close converse with him—could say, “We beheld his glory” (John i. 14).

CONCLUSION. So it is to-day. This is a universal law—*What God is to you—what Christ is to you*, shows what you are, and determines what you shall be. The gospel is an open secret, but still a secret, from proud, worldly hearts. The physician is for those who are sick and *know it*. The Saviour is for sinners who feel themselves sinners. The living water will not flow into a vessel turned upside down. Heaven itself would be no heaven to a heart full of love of the world, of self, of sin, and void of love to God.

Ver. 35.—*Our exaltation through God’s gentleness.* “Thy gentleness hath made me great.” “Gentleness!” A most remarkable and wonderful word to apply to the Almighty Creator, the infinite God! Nowhere else do we find it thus applied. As applied to men, the Hebrew word so rendered here means “meekness,” “lowliness.” We are reminded of our Saviour’s words, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” “Gentleness” is a very happy and beautiful translation. “Condescension,” which the Revisers give in the margin, would not be nearly so apt. It reminds us of Ps. cxiii. 6. But *there* the leading thought is the glory and condescension of God; here, *our exaltation* through his gracious gentleness.

I. THE GENTLENESS OF GOD’S PROVIDENCE IS THE SAFEGUARD OF ALL OUR WELFARE, the condition of all human greatness and prosperity. Human life is like a flower, that can thrive only if fenced from storms and frosts. We are in a world filled with forces which, if they broke loose, would be our destruction. There is power sleeping in the winds and waves to wreck or drown all our navies; in earthquakes, to overthrow all our cities; in blight and insect ravages, to destroy our harvests. Even the light snow-flakes, if they fell for a fortnight twenty feet deep all over our land, would turn it into a desert of the dead. On the other hand, how gently those immense forces work which minister to life! How smoothly earth flies in her yearly circle! No eye, or ear, or sense of ours can make the vapour rising from the ocean to fill the springs and water the plains; the secret ministry of the world of plants to the life of the animal world—pouring forth from numberless millions of millions of invisible mouths vital air, and removing what otherwise would soon poison and stifle us; or the pulse of growth in bud and blade, leaf, flower, and fruit, in spring and summer, as the returning tide of life answers to the gentle sunshine. “He causeth the grass to grow,” etc. (Ps. civ. 14, 24, 27; 2 Cor. ix. 10). How gently the great machine works! How gently the sun-beam touches the eye, after its flight of over ninety millions of miles in eight minutes! How gently the force of gravity, that holds suns and worlds in their places, draws the child’s foot to the ground and poises the gnat in the air! True, nature has a stern side, by fixing our thoughts on which a gloomy view may be made out. But take in the whole scope of natural law and Divine providence. For one city overthrown by earthquake, how many have stood safe for ages! For one shipwreck, how many pros-



perous voyages! For a season of local scarcity, how many plenteous harvests! For one home in mourning, how many bright with health and love!—how many happy years, perhaps, in that very home! In a word, our Saviour sums up all we can sav of the gracious gentleness of our Father's providence (Luke xii. 6, 7; Matt. vi. 26—30).

II. THE GENTLENESS OF GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN HIS WORD IS OUR HIGHEST WISDOM. The Bible is a wonderfully different book from anything the wisest of men could have imagined as a revelation of God. Philosophers and men of genius, had they been consulted, would have agreed that it must be a book for the select few, not the multitude. The notion of teaching peasants, slaves, children, the deep things of God, would have seemed to them folly. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." He has given us a book for the cottage, the schoolroom, the sick-chamber, as well as for the college, the palace, the cathedral. A compilation of short books that look as though collected by chance, yet with wondrous living unity. Depth is concealed by clearness; sublimity by simplicity. Its deepest, highest lessons are given in words a child may understand. No words are too homely, no similitudes too humble, if only they can point the arrow of truth, or wing it home to the heart. We read of God's eye, ear, hand, face; his throne, footstool, sword; of his remembering, forgetting, being angry, grieved, repenting, being well-pleased (look at Amos ii. 13; Mal. i. 6; Isa. i. 3, 14, 18; xlix. 15, 16; Rev. vii. 17). A long unlovely name has been invented by learned men to express this setting forth of Divine things in human language, "anthropomorphism." It is used as though a reproach, indicating the ignorance and narrowness of the sacred writers. Suppose the Bible had been a book to please philosophic critics, what would have been its value to mankind? Suppose our heavenly Father had disdained to speak to us in our own language, how should we have learned that we are his children? The aim of his Word, his message to men, is not to make us philosophers, but to bring us sinners home to God. That teaching which best secures this end is worthiest of God.

III. THE GENTLENESS OF GOD IS THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF OUR PRAYERS. It would seem reasonable for God to say to us, "Prayer is needless; I know all your wants and desires. Presumptuous; I am the Judge, not you, of what is best. Useless; you cannot change my all-wise purposes." Then we should have been deprived of the main comfort of life; our sheet-anchor in trouble; our closest, happiest, highest fellowship with our Maker and Father. Look at Abraham interceding for the guilty cities; Moses interceding for apostate Israel; Jonah crying from the sea-depths; Peter praying by the corpse of Dorcas; Paul over that of Eutychus. Read the promises to prayer. Consult the experience of all Christians in all ages. In prayer, our weakness takes hold on God's strength. *His gentleness makes us great.*

IV. Lastly, God's GENTLENESS IS SEEN IN HIS MERCY TOWARDS SINNERS. The Bible, like Nature, has a severe side; a severity solely aimed against that which is man's deadliest enemy—*sin*. It is possible so to read it that terror and judgment seem to overshadow mercy and love. This is to misread it utterly. It is to forget that the terrible judgments it records—such as the Deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the plagues of Egypt, the destruction of the sinful nations, the overthrow of Jerusalem, of Babylon—stand as sure warnings, indispensably necessary, in the long thousands of years during which God has made the sun to shine and his rain to fall on the evil and unthankful, "not willing that any should perish" (Matt. v. 45; 2 Pet. iii. 9). Above all, the crowning revelation of God to man, for which the whole Old Testament law and history were the preparation, is "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." He is "the Brightness of the Father's glory, the express Image of his Person." All power is his. That brightness might have blinded us; that power crushed us. But "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." His gentleness makes us great. He stoops to lift us to God. *Jesus*, the Man of sorrows, the Friend of sinners, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, weeping by the grave, bidding the weary come to him for rest, taking the children in his arms, washing his disciples' feet, led as a lamb to the slaughter, praying for his murderers, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, asks us, as he asked his apostles, "Have ye understood all these things?" And if our hearts can answer, "Yea, Lord," he replies, "He that hath seen *me* hath seen the Father."

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—50.**—*The conqueror's song of praise and hope.* It is not our purpose, nor is it our province, in this section of the 'Pulpit Commentary,' to write homilies on specific texts; but rather to deal with this psalm (as we have done with others) *as a whole*—for it is a unity—and to show how grand a basis it presents for the pulpit exposition of the provisions of "the everlasting covenant" to which allusion is made in the last verse of the psalm. The student and expositor might with advantage refer at the outset to Isa. lv. 3, "I will give you the sure mercies of David," with the view of showing that the promises made to David do immeasurably transcend any merely personal reference; that they include all the blessings which come to us through him who, though David's Son, was yet David's Lord. There is no reason to doubt the Davidic authorship of the psalm. There are, moreover, more data than most psalms present, to aid us in deciding the approximate date of its composition. We have it recorded in 2 Sam. xxii. 4—51. This gives us one historic clue to its date. Besides, the tone of triumph which is heard throughout it was scarcely heard in the later days of David, after his great crime had darkened the remainder of his earthly life. Vers. 19—24 could scarcely have been written after that catastrophe, even though it be urged that David writes rather of his administration as king than of his behaviour as a man. Regarding, then, the inscription at the head as showing us the occasion on which the psalm was first penned, and taking into account the prophetic far-reachingness of its closing words, we are called on to view it in a double aspect—one historical, the other typical.

I. LET US SKETCH ITS CONTENTS AS HISTORICALLY REFERRING TO KING DAVID AND HIS CONQUESTS. 1. *Here is a distinct reference to David as king.* And while we should miss very much of the significance of the psalm, were we to omit the larger view to which we shall presently refer, yet, on the other hand, if we omit the strictly historical application, our use of the psalm will be strangely incomplete. As, without the historic setting, there would be no basis on which to set anything further, so, without the larger view, there would be no adequate superstructure set up upon that basis. Combine both, and the glory of the psalm stands forth as combining inspiration and revelation in the contents of this triumphant song (see ver. 50, where the remarkable phrase occurs, "his king;" i.e. God's king). David was God's appointed king for Israel, and as such he tunes his harp for Jehovah's praise. 2. *With David as king, God had made a covenant.* This is implied in ver. 50, where the mercies already granted are referred to as pledged "for evermore." 3. *David had been plunged into fierce conflict.* (See vers. 4, 5.) The study of David's life will furnish us with a host of facts in this direction. 4. *Conflict had driven him to earnest prayer.* (Ver. 6.) Again and again had he passed through this experience (see Pss. xxxiv. 6; cxxxviii. 3). The believer's most piercing cries are sent upward to God, when he is being pierced by the sharpest arrows of affliction. How is it that we so often need the pressure of sorrow to quicken us from languor in prayer? Sad,—that prayer should be forced out rather than drawn out! 5. *Prayer had been followed by timely deliverance.* This is set forth in poetry which is truly sublime (see vers. 7—16).<sup>1</sup> The Divine deliverance was seen: (1) In girding the assailed one with strength (ver. 39). (2) In rescuing him from his pursuers (ver. 16). (3) In causing the foe to be prostrate under the conqueror's feet (ver. 40). (4) In bringing forth the conqueror to liberty and gladness (ver. 19). 6. *Such deliverance led him to triumph in God.* It may be asked, however, "Is not such joy in God rather of an inferior order, when it arises because God has done for us just what we wished?" Perhaps so. But that is not a correct setting of the case before us. It is this: God had promised deliverance. David pleaded with God on the ground of the promise; and he found the great Promiser true. Hence the jubilation. When prayers that are presented on the basis of God's promise are abundantly answered, gratitude may well burst forth in holy song (see vers. 1, 2). What joy to a believer to read in the trials and reliefs of life a perpetual revelation of the loving-kindness of God! 7. *The mercies of the past assure him of help in the*

<sup>1</sup> In Bishop Perowne's notes, some beautiful explanations of the grand imagery of this psalm will be found.

*future.* (Ver. 50.) "For evermore." Even so. So often has prayer been turned to praise, so often have we cast our burden at God's feet, and borne a song away, that we cannot doubt him now. Rather will we sing, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." God *has* helped us, and will "for evermore."

II. LET US NOTE ITS CONTENTS TYPICALLY, AS FULFILLED AND FULFILLING IN ONE WHO IS OF DAVID'S SEED, YET IS DAVID'S LORD.<sup>1</sup> Although it is easy to explain the greater part of the phrases of this psalm by incidents in David's personal career, there are some which seem to tower above his or any man's experience, and which can be adequately interpreted only as the psalm is regarded as having not only historical meaning, but also typical and predictive significance. How this manifests itself will appear, we trust, from the present outlines. 1. *The kingship of David was not only personal, but also typical and prophetic.* That such was the case may be gathered from the last verse of this psalm, and also from a study of the following passages: 2 Sam. vii. 12—16; xxiii. 2—5; Pss. xvi. 8—10; lxxxix. 20—37; cxxxii. 11—18; cx.; Matt. xxii. 41—45; Acts ii. 25—36; xiii. 32—37. That gracious redemptive work, which began with the calling out of Abraham (Isa. li. 2, Hebrew), was being carried forward through David with a view to its fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is seated on David's throne. And the glory of King David is infinitely surpassed in David's Lord; while the promises made to David and his seed are made over to all who are in blessed covenant relation to God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. lv. 3).<sup>2</sup> 2. *The Lord Jesus and his saints are gone forth to war.* (Ver. 34.) In a high and holy sense, as the kingship of David was typical, so also were his wars. One of the early visions of the seer of Patmos indicated this. He sees One who speaks of himself as the Root and Offspring of David (Rev. xxii. 16) going forth conquering and to conquer (Rev. vi. 2); and, indeed, the entire Book of the Apocalypse might be called the 'Book of the Wars of the Lord.' 3. *The issue of the great conflict is already foreseen.* The "for evermore" with which the psalm closes spans the whole of the present dispensation, and reaches forward to the time when Jesus shall have "all enemies beneath his feet." This is beyond doubt. The everlasting covenant is "ordered in all things and sure." 4. *Ere this final victory, there will intervene many a struggle and many a rescue.* While David's Lord is on high, controlling the conflict, and administering all, the saints are in the midst of the struggle. As individuals they are called to "wrestle against the world-rulers of darkness." Ministers of the gospel are to "endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." And the Church, as a whole, will have to undergo many a severe struggle. At times it may seem as if the cause were all but lost. But the great Commander will ensure his army all timely rescue as well as final triumph. 5. *All the enemies of Christ will be put to shame.* (Isa. lx. 12; Rom. xvi. 20; Ps. xviii. 40—42; also vers. 13, 14, 45.) 6. *The great King will receive the homage of the peoples, and be exalted above all.* (Vers. 43, 44.) The expression in ver. 43, "the Head of the nations," can be fully accomplished only in Christ as our victorious Lord. "All nations shall serve him." 7. *All who are now fighting on the King's side will share his victory.* That which is the result for David is ensured also to "his seed" (ver. 50). As our Lord is not alone in the war, so he will not be alone when the war is over. His triumph will be that also of those who are his. 8. *The result of all will be a new disclosure of God.* (Vers. 1, 2, 30, 31, 46, 47.) Just as David's career was ever unfolding to him the faithfulness and love of God, so will the result of the Church's conflict reveal to believers how great, how vast, was the scheme

<sup>1</sup> This is not the place to discuss the question of prophecy in the sense of prediction. The works of Dr. Patrick Fairbairn and Dr. Payne Smith should be consulted; also the late Dr. J. Pye Smith's 'Scripture Testimony to the Messiah.' A wise, instructive article, by Rev. C. H. Waller, in the *Theological Monthly*, August, 1889, will be found helpful. Those who will not admit the existence or validity of prediction must, if consistent, reject a large part of the New Testament as well as of the Old.

<sup>2</sup> "David and David's rule over the nations are but a type and image of Christ, and of that spiritual kingdom which he came to establish" (Perowne, *in loc.*). "If it be remembered that the second and forty-ninth verses are both quoted in the New Testament (Heb. ii. 13; Rom. xv. 19) as the words of the Lord Jesus, it will be clear that a greater than David is here" (C. H. Spurgeon, *in loc.*).

of mercy for men's deliverance, and for the discomfiture of the powers of ill. The glory of God will stand out revealed in the day of final triumph, putting doubts and fears to flight, as his love stands forth vindicated in the glorious result of all. And the oft-repeated Scripture phrase, "They shall know that I am the Lord," will be fulfilled with a glory and grandeur beyond our utmost stretch of thought. 9. *All this is now God's noblest prophecy, and will be hereafter the theme of the saints' noblest song.* Ps. xviii. may well be regarded as finding its exposition, its supplement, in Rev. v. In the psalm we have God's providences forecast; in the Apocalypse we have God's providences reviewed. In the former David's conquests are recited; in the latter the conquests of the Root of David. In the former we have the song of the victorious David; in the latter the new song of the victorious Seed of David. And by as much as David's Lord is greater than David, by so much will the new song of the redeemed transcend the noblest flights of Hebrew praise.—C.

**Vers. 1—50.—A retrospect of life.** The sailor tells of the perils of the sea; the traveller recounts the varied incidents of his career; and the soldier who has passed through battles and sieges can speak of hairbreadth escapes and moving accidents by flood and field. So it is with human life. We have the power of looking back; we can in imagination revive the past, and as scene after scene rises before us, our heart is thrilled with various emotions. And what we have experienced and recalled, we can set forth to others. The opening of this psalm is very touching and beautiful. It is as if the fire which had been burning within could no longer be restrained. The psalmist's pent-up feelings must find an outlet. Before and beyond all, he must let his full heart speak. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." This may be regarded as the key-note, and it is touching how the psalmist dwells upon it, with variations, as if he could not let it go (ver. 2). Love to God was not an impulse, or the result of purposes, but the very habit and delight of his soul. Name after name, and epithet after epithet, is pronounced, each having its own peculiar associations, and each not only expressing, but exciting his love the more. In this retrospect of life we have—

I. **THE PERILS ESCAPED.** Various images are employed. We see how enemies increased and dangers thickened. In the midst of one terrible scene of tumult and storm, where all perils are gathered into one, the psalmist seems about to be engulfed. But in his helplessness, the hand of God from out of the cloud lays hold of him, and draws him forth from the great waters. His cry for help was not in vain. So let us remember with gratitude God's goodness. There are some that dishonour the great memories of life, because they forget God. Let us acknowledge the hand of God, not only in the crises of our life, but also in the countless instances in which God has shielded us from dangers that we knew not, and saved us from evils and mischances of our daily life which else might have been our ruin.

II. **THE PRINCIPLES EVOLVED.** Trials are a test. There are certain principles which we should do well to hold fast, whatever comes. 1. *God's Fatherly care.* Relation stands. God does not change his love, though he may change his ways. Through all afflictions he cleaves to his people, and his people should cleave to him. 2. *The efficacy of prayer.* There are infinite resources with God, but they are only available to us by prayer. We may not be able to see how help can come, or relief may reach us in ways different from what we expected; but let us have faith in God's Word. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." To this David and all the saints bear witness. 3. *That all things are working to a perfect end.* God is just, and will do justly. God is good, and he cannot will us aught but good. Let us trust him utterly. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam. iii. 26; Rom. viii. 28).

III. **THE BLESSINGS ENJOYED.** Light shines in the darkness. Strength is evolved out of weakness. Progress is made in spite of opposition. Peace is enjoyed in the midst of trouble. Hope is cherished in the face of difficulties and sorrows. Victory is assured over every foe. And why? Because God is with his people (vers. 31—45).

IV. **THE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS DEMANDED.** (Vers. 46, 50.) The psalm concludes with a joyous burst of praise, in which, with brief touches, scenes previously described are recalled, and the rich fulness of the Divine goodness is set forth. There is personal thanksgiving for God's love and mighty works. But there is more. There is the

acknowledgment of God as the God of all flesh—not only of David and of Israel, but of all nations. And there is the grand hope expressed that, as God had brought the nations around within the dominion of Israel, so he would draw all the nations of the earth within the benign and blessed rule of Messiah (Rom. xv. 9). “In Christ, the Son of David, David’s fallen throne has lasting continuance; and in him everything that was promised to David’s seed has eternal truth and reality. According to its final prospect, the praise of Jahve, the God of David, his Anointed, is praise of the Father of Jesus Christ” (Delitzsch).—W. F.

Ver. 35.—*A God-made man.* We often hear of what are called self-made men; but here is something nobler by far—a *God-made man*. “Thy gentleness hath made me great.” We learn from this text that—

I. **MAN IS CAPABLE OF GREATNESS.** At first, man was made great, for he was made in the image of God. But he sinned and fell. Still, the capacity remained. Hence there was misery. Ambition wrongly directed became a bane. Powers and cravings that rose above earthly things left the heart unsatisfied. To be great, man must be raised from his fallen state, and renewed in the spirit of his mind. Love is the spirit of greatness; service is its test, and power with man is its proof. He is the greatest who serves his brethren best in love.

II. **THAT GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE MAN GREAT.** It has been said that “some men are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them;” but this is a low and false view of greatness. It is of the earth, earthy. True greatness does not come from without, but from within; it is not a thing of circumstances, but of character; it does not depend upon the will of other men, but upon the spirit that dwelleth in us. We must be great in heart before we can be great in life. When God would make a man great, he not only gives him the right spirit, but submits him to a process of education and discipline. God has already made many great. Think of the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, and the exceeding great multitude of the saints of every kindred and tongue; all these would acknowledge, with glad and grateful hearts, that they owed everything to God. Their confession would be, “We are his workmanship” (Eph. ii. 10; Rev. iv. 10).

III. **GOD MAKES MEN GREAT BY HIS GENTLENESS.** Force may overcome force, but it cannot win the heart. If we are dealt with in the way of terror and wrath, our tendency will be to resistance, aversion, and alienation. Severity may be, at times, necessary, but it is not severity but love that conquers. Mark God’s gentleness: 1. In his manifestation of himself in Christ. 2. In the love of the Spirit in the Word. 3. In the gracious discipline of Providence. We have in the life of David a beautiful example of the way in which God makes a man great. In the Gospels we have the true doctrine as to greatness (Matt. xx. 26), and illustrative facts of the most convincing kind. See how Matthew was called; how Zacchæus was raised to a nobler life; how Peter and the rest of the apostles were trained to humble and loving service in behalf of their fellow-men. These, and such as these, will be hailed as truly great men when kings and conquerors, and all the “laurelled Barabbases of history,” who have lived only for themselves, are forgotten.—W. F.

Vers. 1—50.—*The retrospect of a life: a sermon for the close of the year.* “In this magnificent hymn the royal poet sketches in a few grand outlines the history of his life. By God’s help he had subdued every enemy, and now, in middle life, looking back with devout thankfulness on the past, he sings this great song of praise to the God of his life.” Divisions of the psalm: 1. The introduction, setting forth all that Jehovah is to David (vers. 1—3). 2. The record of David’s sufferings and peril, and the mighty deliverance by which he was rescued (vers. 4—19). 3. The reason for this deliverance, in the character of God and the principles of his government (vers. 20—30). 4. The blessings which David had received in his life; his own preservation and that of his race; help and strength in battle, rule over all enemies (vers. 31—45). 5. Joyful thanksgiving and acknowledgment of all God’s mercies (vers. 46—50). The general subject of the psalm is—*The retrospect of a life.* The interest of such a retrospect depends on the following conditions:—

I. WHETHER A MAN HAS HAD A HISTORY OR NOT. (Ver. 43.) Anything to distinguish his life from the uneventful lives of the myriads who are born, pass through life, and die, and leave no trace behind them. But Moses and David, Paul and others gave birth to history, and have mingled in the greatest affairs of a nation and of the world, and have much to think of and celebrate when they look back. So of modern great men. They animated and created their opportunities. Have we made our lives in any way worth looking back upon? Domestic history. Thinkers as well as actors make history. What Christ has done.

II. WHETHER A MAN HAS SEEN GOD IN HIS LIFE OR NOT. (Vers. 19, 29, 32, 39.) To most men God has been only remotely related to their lives—a power at the back of things generally, but not occupying every single event and experience of their existence. To David and all the great saints of the world, God was everything and everywhere in his life. God had anointed him for every work and every office; and every event was a manifestation of his love and righteousness and power. The consciousness of such a past is very grand and elevating. Our life is rich or poor accordingly. Sense of God in common life and duties.

III. WHETHER THE LIFE HAS BEEN RIGHTEOUS OR WICKED. (Ver. 20.) We turn our eyes from a life that has been ill spent, and are filled with reproach and sorrow. If we *know* that we have lived a wicked life, we know that we are unworthy and guilty, and are self-condemned. Whether David wrote this psalm before or after his sin with Bathsheba, we cannot say; but he affirms his righteousness in the most emphatic way. "He has kept the ways of the Lord, and has not wickedly departed from him." Such a retrospect is full of deep power and sense of triumph.

IV. WHETHER A MAN HAS ACHIEVED HIS OBJECTS OR NOT. (Vers. 37, 38, 48.) David was a king, and had been in many wars and troubles; but he had, through God, triumphed over all his difficulties and foes. How many of us fail, or only partly succeed, in the things we aim at, because we have been profane and faithless!

V. WHETHER WE HAVE A FUTURE TO ANTICIPATE, AS WELL AS A PAST TO REMEMBER. To some the past is all; they have no future. But David had a bright future as well as a glorious past. "In thy presence is fulness of joy," etc.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XIX.

THE nineteenth psalm is one of meditative praise. The psalmist, looking abroad over the whole world, finds two main subjects for his eulogy—first, the glorious fabric of the material creation (vers. 1—6); and, secondly, the Divine Law which God has given to man (vers. 7—11). Having thus poured out his heart in praise and thanksgiving to God, he turns his eye inward upon himself, and finds many shortcomings (ver. 12). The thought of these leads him to prayer, and so the hymn concludes with a few short petitions (vers. 12—14).

Rhythmically, the divisions correspond to the changes in the thought. There is first a stately movement, continued for six verses, devoted to the glories of the universe; then a livelier strain in longer (mostly *double*) lines, praising the Law of the Lord, and extending to five verses only; finally, a conclusion in short, broken lines, limited to three verses.

The psalm is generally allowed to be David's, and is declared to be his by the title. There are no internal indications by which to assign it a date.

Ver. 1.—The heavens declare the glory of God; literally, *the heavens are recounting the glory of God*—of El, "the Mighty One"—the God of nature (see Rom. i. 20). David is perhaps carrying out his declared intention (Ps. xviii. 49) of "praising God among the heathen," and therefore takes their standpoint—the ground of nature. And the firmament showeth his handywork. (On "the firmament," see Gen. i. 6, 20.) It is the entire atmosphere enveloping the earth, in which the clouds hang and the birds move. Like the starry heavens above, this, too, "showeth," or rather, "proclaimeth," God's handiwork.

Ver. 2.—Day unto day uttereth speech; literally, *poureth out speech*, as water is poured from a fountain. Each day bears its testimony to the next, and so the stream goes on in a flow that is never broken. And night unto night showeth knowledge. Dr. Kay compares St. Paul's statement, that "that which may be *known* of God" is

manifested to man through the creation (Rom. i. 19, 20). A certain superiority seems to be assigned to the night, "as though the contemplation of the starry firmament awakened deeper, more spiritual, thoughts than the brightness of day."

Ver. 3.—There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard; rather, *there is no speech, there are no words; their voice is not heard*; i.e. the speech which they utter is not common speech—it is without sound, without language; no articulate voice is to be heard. (So Ewald, Hupfeld, Perowne, Kay, Hengstenberg, Alexander, and our Revisers.)

Ver. 4.—Their line is gone out through all the earth. It is much disputed what "their line" means. The word used, *qan* (קַן), means, ordinarily, a "measuring-line" (Ezek. xlvii. 3; Zeoh. i. 16, etc.), whence it comes to have the further sense of a terminus or boundary; that which the measuring-line marks out. It is also thought to have signified an architect's rule; and, hence, anything regulative, as a decree, precept, or law (see Isa. xxviii. 10). The LXX. translated it in this place by *ᾠδὴ*, "a musical sound;" and Dr. Kay supposes "the regulative chord," or "key-note," to be intended. Perhaps "decree" would be in this place the best rendering, since it would suit the "words" (*millim*) of the second clause. The "decree" of the heavens is one proclaiming the glory of God, and the duty of all men to worship him. And their words to the end of the world. Though they have neither speech nor language, nor any articulate words, yet they have "words" in a certain sense. *Millim* is said to be used of thoughts just shaping themselves into language, but not yet uttered (Kay). In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun. God has made the heavens the sun's dwelling-place, the place where he passes the day. There is, perhaps, a tacit allusion to the Shechinah, which dwelt in the tabernacle of the congregation.

Ver. 5.—Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; literally, *and he is as a bridegroom*. The bridegroom went forth to meet the bride in glorious apparel, and "preceded by a blaze of torch-light" (Kay). The sun's "chamber" is where he passes the night—below the earth; from this he bursts forth at morning in his full glory, scattering the darkness, and lighting up his splendid "tabernacle." And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race (comp. Judg. v. 31, "As the sun when he goeth forth in his might"). The Prayer-book Version, if less literal, better conveys the spirit of the original.

Ver. 6.—His going forth is from the end of the heaven. The poet, like other poets,

describes the phenomena as they appear to him. He does not broach any astronomical theory. And his circuit (i.e. his course) unto the ends of it; i.e. he proceeds from one end of the heavens to the other. And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. Many things are hidden from the light of the sun, but nothing from its "heat," which is the vital force whence the whole earth receives life and energy.

Vers. 7—11.—The transition from the glories of the material universe to the "law of the Lord" is abrupt and startling. Some go so far as to say that there is no connection at all between the first and second parts of the psalm. But it is the law and order that pervades the material universe which constitutes its main glory; and the analogy between God's physical laws and his moral laws is evident, and generally admitted (see the great work of Bishop Butler, part i.).

Ver. 7.—The Law of the Lord is perfect. Whatsoever proceeds from God is perfect in its kind; his "Law" especially—the rule of life to his rational creatures. That salvation is not by the Law is not the fault of the Law, but of man, who cannot keep it. "The Law" itself "is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12). Converting (rather, as in the margin, *restoring*) the soul. The word employed, *mëshibah*, is used of restoring from disorder and decay (Ps. lxxx. 19), from sorrow and affliction (Ruth iv. 15), from death (1 Kings xvii. 21, 22). The Law, by instructing men, restores them from moral blindness to the light which is theirs by nature (Rom. i. 19), and, as a further consequence, in many cases, restores them from sin to righteousness. The testimony of the Lord is sure. *'Eduth*—the word translated "testimony"—is employed especially of the Decalogue (Exod. xxv. 16, 21, 22, 26; Numb. ix. 15; xvii. 23; xviii. 2, etc.); but may be regarded as one of the many synonyms under which the whole Law may be spoken of (see Ps. cxix. 2, 14, 22, 24, 88, etc.). The Law is a "sure"—i.e. fixed, firm, stable—in comparison with the fleeting, shifting, unstable judgments of human reason. Making wise the simple; i.e. enlightening their moral judgment.

Ver. 8.—The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; rather, *the precepts of the Lord are right*. Another of the many synonyms under which the Law may be spoken of (see Dr. Kay's preface to the hundred and nineteenth psalm). God's precepts "rejoice the heart" of the godly. They are not felt as stern com-

mands, but as gracious intimations of what God desires man to do for his own good. The commandment of the Lord is pure; i.e. spotless, clean, without fault (comp. ver. 7, "The Law of the Lord is perfect"). Enlightening the eyes; i.e. giving light to the intellect.

Ver. 9.—The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. Hengstenberg explains "the fear of the Lord" in this place as "the instruction afforded by God for fearing him." And certainly, unless we adopt some such explanation, we shall find it difficult to account for the intrusion of the clause into its present position. The Law, the testimony, the statutes (or precepts), the commandment (vers. 7, 8), and the judgments (ver. 9), are external to man, objective; the fear of the Lord, as commonly understood, is internal, subjective, a "settled habit of his soul." It is not a thing of the same kind with the other five nominatives, and appears out of place among them. Hence it seems best, with Professor Alexander, to adopt Hengstenberg's explanation. The Law, viewed as teaching the fear of God, is undoubtedly "clean"—i.e. pure, perfect—and "endures for ever," or is of perpetual obligation. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. In "judgments" we have another of the recognized synonyms for the entire Law (Ps. cxix. 7, 13, 43, 52, 62), which is from first to last "exceeding righteous and true" (Ps. cxix. 138, Prayer-book Version).

Ver. 10.—More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold. (For the difference between "gold" (זהב) and "fine gold" (זהב טהור), see the "Homiletic Commentary on Job," p. 458.) God's Law is a far greater good to man, and therefore far more to be desired, than any amount of riches; much more must it be preferable to honey and the honeycomb.

Ver. 11.—Moreover by them is thy servant warned. This verse is a sort of connecting link between the second and the third parts of the psalm. Through its subject-matter, which is still the Law of the Lord, it belongs to the second part; but metricaly, and by the introduction of the person of the psalmist ("thy servant"), it belongs to the third. David feels that to him it is the crowning excellency of the Law, that it teaches, instructs, or "warns" him. And in keeping of them there is great reward. Not only the reward promised in Exod. xv.

26, or "the recompense of the reward" laid up for men in heaven, but a present reward "in the act of keeping them" (Kay). Obedience, like virtue, is its own reward.

Vers. 12—14.—A consideration of the Law cannot but raise the thought of transgression. Man "had not known sin but by the Law" (Rom. vii. 7), and he cannot contemplate the Law without being reminded of possible disobedience to it. The psalmist's thoughts are led in this direction, and he ends with an earnest prayer against "secret sins" (ver. 12), against "presumptuous sins" (ver. 13), and against sins of word and thought (ver. 14), addressed to "God his Strength [or, 'his Rock'] and his Redeemer."

Ver. 12.—Who can understand his errors? rather, *who can discern (or, perceive) his errors?* i.e. all of them. Who will not overlook some, try as he may to search out his heart? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Those which are hidden from me, which I cannot discern.

Ver. 13.—Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins (comp. Exod. xxi. 14; Numb. xv. 30; Deut. xvii. 12). Wilful, intentional, deliberate sins are intended—such as cut off from grace. They are called "presumptuous ones," being "personified as tyrants who strive to bring the servant of God into unbecoming subjection to them" (Hengstenberg). Let them not have dominion over me (comp. Ps. cxix. 133; Rom. vi. 14). Then shall I be upright; or, "blameless" (ἀναμωμος, LXX.). And I shall be innocent from the great transgression. There is no article in the original. Translate, and innocent of great transgression (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 14.—Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight. Nor let my *doings* only be righteous; let the door of my lips be kept, that I utter no evil word, and the recesses of my heart be purged, that I think no evil thought. O Lord, my strength; literally, *my Rock* (צור), as in Ps. xviii. 1. And my Redeemer (comp. Ps. lxxviii. 35; and see Gen. xlviii. 16; Exod. xv. 13; Lev. xxv. 48; Ruth iv. 4. Job xix. 25; Isa. lxi. 9). As applied to God, the word "Redeemer" (גֹּאֲלִי) always means a "Deliverer" from sin, or death, or danger.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The saint's prayer against sin.* "Cleanse thou me." Natural theology, revelation, spiritual experience,—these are the three successive spheres of thought



through which this wondrously beautiful psalm leads us. God in nature; God in Scripture; God in the heart and conscience to which he manifests himself. And in this last sphere, reading the psalm with Christian eyes, we can see what the inspired psalmist "desired to see, but saw not"—*God in Christ*. First (as in Ps. viii.), David lifts up his eyes to the sky; and as he beholds the starry host in its silent unswerving march, the moon walking in brightness, marking, as she waxes and wanes, the lapse of days and months; the sun coming forth in morning splendour, accomplishing his appointed journey, and leading the seasons in his train,—the royal singer sees in all this a perpetual revelation of the glory of God, his wisdom, power, goodness, and unchanging law. Whether men attend to it or not, the revelation is there.

"What though no real voice or sound," etc.

Then the psalmist's mind rises to contemplate a higher region, in which a nobler law than the laws of nature reveals God's glory—the region of thought, duty, spiritual life. Compared with this, all outward beauty and order are but a passing shadowy show. "The Law of the Lord," etc. (ver. 7). Lastly, conscience opens the windows of the psalmist's own inmost soul, and lets the light of this glorious and perfect Law shine in. "In keeping . . . reward" (ver. 11). Yes. But is that reward mine? Have I kept this glorious and perfect Law? If I have not wilfully broken and presumptuously despised it, yet has not my best obedience come immeasurably short? "Who can understand his errors?" And then the lofty and almost jubilant tone of the psalm is subdued into lowliness, and it closes with prayer, "Cleanse," etc. In these closing verses there is progress and climax. (1) *Secret faults*, from which the psalmist prays to be cleansed; (2) *presumptuous sins*, from which he prays to be kept; and (3) *great transgression*, of which he trusts God will hold him guiltless.

I. **SECRET SINS.** Perhaps St. Paul had this passage in his mind (Rom. ii. 12, 16). There are two sorts of sin, widely different, which may be called "secret sins." (1) Sins which the offender practises secretly, and carefully keeps secret; (2) sins into which we fall unawares, and which are a secret even from ourselves. Of both kinds those solemn words are true (Ps. xc. 8). Not seldom, the searching light of the great day is anticipated, and a hidden course of sin brought to light, to the confusion and ruin of the sinner. Of all the sad sights that meet the eye, and well-nigh break the heart of the Christian pastor, incomparably the saddest is when one who has lived in honour and esteem among his fellow-Christians, perhaps far on in middle life, or even in old age—active and prominent as a Christian worker; alas! in some cases even in the Christian ministry—is suddenly discovered to have been secretly leading a dishonest, impure, or intemperate life (*like a tree*, hollow at the heart, suddenly uprooted). Such cases not merely grieve; they astound. They give terrible point and emphasis to the question, "Who can understand errors?" (for, you observe, the word "his" is inserted). Who can unravel the deceitfulness of sin, or comprehend its folly, or picture the inward anguish of a life of "secret sin," hidden under a surface of apparent godliness and Christian activity? Evidently, however, it is the other kind of sins of which the text speaks—sins which God sees in us, though we see them not in ourselves. This is clear, firstly, because of the tone of intense sincerity pervading this psalm; secondly, because the word here rendered "cleanse" means "to absolve," or "set free from guilt." It is the same rendered "innocent" in ver. 13 (Revised Version, "clear"). We must include, however, the idea of actual inward cleansing, by the Holy Spirit, of the thoughts, desires, and affections, from which such sins spring; because, wherever God bestows pardon, he gives grace to "follow after holiness." That such sins *are* sins, and need God's forgiveness, is plain from the fact that we blame ourselves on discovering them. "I was wrong; I did not see it: I meant to do right, but I see I was very wrong." We failed to see what a larger exercise of charity, or humility, or sympathy, or care and attention, would have enabled us to see. We judged too harshly, hastily, ignorantly. We were absorbed in some agreeable duty, and neglected a more urgent but uninteresting one. How often we bitterly blame ourselves for what at the moment we never thought wrong; perhaps even prided ourselves upon! If we ourselves often make this discovery, what a multitude of sins hidden from our forgetful memory and imperfectly enlightened conscience, must lie naked and open to him who sets "our secret sins in the light of his countenance" (Heb. iv. 13)! What need to pray, "Cleanse," etc.!

II. Here is, secondly, a class of sins regarding which the psalmist prays, not to be pardoned for having committed, but to be "kept back"—withheld, restrained altogether from committing them: "PRESUMPTUOUS SINS." The best commentary here, because the one we may suppose the psalmist to have had in mind, is in the Law of Moses (Numb. xv., especially vers. 27—31). These are the sins of which St. John says that the true child of God does not commit sin (1 John iii. 9). He has fully taught that real Christians do commit sin, and need forgiveness (1 John i. 9, 10; ii. 1). But not wilful sin—sin "with a high hand" (1 John v. 18). A child of God knowingly and perversely disobeying God, despising God's Law, defying Divine justice, practically denying the Lord that bought him, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace, is an impossible supposition—a practical contradiction. Yet, how significant is it, that David prays to be "kept back" from even such sins—restrained by a power not his own! He even sees peril of sinking into abject bondage: "Let them not have dominion over me!" These are the sins of which our Lord speaks (John viii. 34). The more willingly and wilfully a man sins, the more does he forge fetters for himself, and become "tied and bound." With profound humility and knowledge of his own heart, the psalmist feels that he has in himself no security. "Is thy servant a dog?" said Hazeel (2 Kings viii. 13); but *he did it* (Prov. xxviii. 26; 1 Cor. x. 12; Ps. cxix. 117).

III. GREAT TRANSGRESSION. What the psalmist humbly prays, he confidently hopes. That he may "absolved," "held guiltless," or (as ver. 12) "cleansed." This cleansing, as it regards sins actually committed, is what St. John calls being cleansed by "the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 7); St. Paul (Rom. v. 9), "being justified by his blood;" St. Peter (1 Pet. i. 2), "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." To forgiveness, the idea of practical holiness, actual purity, is added by the word "upright;" literally (as Revised Version), "perfect;" namely, with that perfection of which Scripture so often speaks—integrity; whole-hearted sincerity. What may we understand by "great transgression," from which the psalmist hopes to be clear? It seems to correspond to the "sin unto death" of which St. John speaks (1 John v. 16, 17). Hence was drawn the famous attempt to classify sins: (1) "mortal," or "deadly;" (2) "venial," capable of forgiveness. The fatal mistake is in trying to judge of sins apart from the person who sins. What is a sin of ignorance in one may be a presumptuous sin in another. The sin of which one repents and finds forgiveness may in another be a sin against so much light and grace that it is *impossible to renew to repentance* (Heb. vi. 4, 6)—"a sin unto death." Let us not pry into that dark abyss; but seek to keep far from its fatal brink. Only remember and be sure of this—sorrow for sin and desire for pardon and purity are a sure proof that no unpardonable sin has been committed. God "pardoneth and absolveth *all them* that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel"—the message of his grace and love in Christ Jesus. To every one—whatsoever his sins may be—who can truly make this prayer his own, the Saviour answers as of old, "I will: be thou clean."

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The voice of God in his works.* There is enough in this psalm for twenty discourses. But in this department of the 'Pulpit Commentary' it is not our province to dwell on specific texts, however attractive, but to indicate how by a homiletic exposition of the psalm *as a whole*, it may be brought home to us for everyday life in the continuous unfolding of the Scripture. At the same time, the two divisions of the psalm are so entirely distinct that they call for separate treatment, as they open up to the preacher entirely different branches of thought and instruction.<sup>1</sup> There is no reason to question the Davidic authorship of the psalm, but it is so couched that from its contents there is nothing by which we can infer either its authorship or date; and it so speaks to man as man, that it is of equal value by whomsoever or whensoever it was penned. We have in its first six verses a rehearsal of the voices of God

<sup>1</sup> No expositor can well afford to overlook the mass of quotations on this psalm in Spurgeon's 'Treasury of David;' but he will need to exercise judgment in the use thereof.

in the firmament above. And we gather from the forms of expression that the writer was accustomed to speak of natural phenomena in the language of his day. In his view the firmament of heaven spread out as a hemisphere above the earth, like a splendid and pellucid sapphire, in which the stars were supposed to be fixed, and over which the Hebrews believed there was a heavenly ocean. The Bible was not meant to teach science, but to teach God. Science has to do with the matter, order, and laws of the creation. In religion we have to do with the great Author of all. And while we find the writer far enough away from our present conceptions of what the heavens *are*, we find he is one to whom God had spoken as Jehovah, the great I AM—and who had been taught God's Law to man as well as God's utterances in nature. And as God's voices to us have become clearer than they were in the psalmist's time, by his revelation in Christ Jesus, so the glory of his works has become amazingly clearer through the discoveries man has made therein; and he will fall very far short of a suitable setting forth of the truths of this first half of the psalm, who does not utilize the recent discoveries of science as a pedestal on which to set, in clearer and fuller ways, Jehovah's glory! The expositor is bound to show how gloriously science helps religion, in furnishing him with new material for setting forth the greatness of God! An unfolding of the verses before us will lead us along several lines of thought, with which we propose to deal cumulatively.

I. THERE ARE NATURAL OBJECTS AND FACTS HERE SPECIFIED. The heavens. The firmament. The sun. The orderly succession of day and night. In regard to each of these, science helps religion. And grand as was the scene in olden time to the natural eye, and with all the imperfections of ancient knowledge, the grandeur is unspeakably vaster now, owing to discoveries which have since been and are still being made. (The expositor of this psalm needs to read up to date in astronomical researches.)

II. AMONG THEM THERE IS INCESSANT ACTIVITY. "The heavens declare," etc. Their activity is not conscious on their part, but it is nevertheless real. Light is ever acting on the vegetable world, and helps to open the petals of the flower, to give blossom its colour, and fruit its sweetness. Thus there is a reciprocal relation established between the sunbeam and the plant. So also is there between the stars above us and the mind of man. And though they utter not a word (ver. 3, Hebrew), they are sounding forth a message to the soul of man. "Their line is gone out," etc. (ver. 4). The word "line" is one of much interest. It meant, first, any cord or string; then a string stretched out so as to emit a musical sound; then the sound emitted by the string; then a full musical chord.

"For ever *singing*, as they shine,  
"The hand that made us is Divine!"

III. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE WONDROUSLY VARIED. The four verbs used here are all of them exceedingly expressive. The heavens are *telling* the glory of God, recounting it to us as in the pages of a book; the firmament *is showing* his handiwork, setting it before our eyes as in a picture; day unto day *welleth forth* speech, pouring it out as from a fountain; night unto night *breatheth out* knowledge, breathing it out gently so that the *attentive* listener may hear. "During the French Revolution, it was said to a peasant, 'I will have all your steeples pulled down, that you may no longer have any object by which you may be reminded of your old superstitions.' 'But,' replied the peasant, 'you cannot help leaving us the stars.'"<sup>1</sup>

IV. WITH ALL THIS VARIETY OF EXPRESSION, THEY TELL OF A CREATING POWER. "The glory of God;" "The firmament sheweth his handiwork." When this is said, there are two points involved—one implied, the other expressed. It is implied that man has the faculty of understanding these varied forms of expression. Surely a perceived object implies a perceiving subject, and a message addressed implies the existence of those by whom it can be understood. The question of the origin of things will, must, come up; quite irrespectively of method, there will be the question of cause. The old design argument is valid as ever, though it may need to be thrown into a different form. That which it requires mind to understand, must *a fortiori* require the equivalent of mind to bring into being. From nature's framework, power, wisdom, benevolent adaptation, order, etc., are manifest. Even the objection raised from the

<sup>1</sup> Bates, 'Cyclopædia,' quoted by C. H. S.

existence of wasted seeds, abortive organs, rudimentary and undeveloped possibilities, comes to nought when it is remembered that no atom of matter is wasted, but, if unused at one moment, is worked up again in other collocations. The advance of the most cultured thought at the present time is remarkable. The old atheism is row out of date; and so, intellectually, is even the old agnosticism. It is behind the times. The latest developments of Darwinism honour God.<sup>1</sup> But while on the ground of knowledge and culture, intellect must admit the existence of "a Power above us," it is only the lowly, devout, and loyal spirit that will see God in all things, and enjoy all things in God.

V. GOD'S MESSAGE FROM THE HEAVENS IS RESPONDED TO IN HOLY SONG. Whoso forgets the title of the psalm will miss much of its beauty and glory. It is meant for the choir-master. It is to be set to music, and uttered in song. Poetry, music, song, are the audible response of man to the inaudible voices of the day and of the night. Through the stars, God speaks to man without words; with his voice man speaks to God. Thus the universe is *one grand antiphony*. God's music delighting man; man's music adoring God. The heavens speak to us of God; we respond to the God of heaven.

Note: Although we do not wish here to anticipate unduly the teaching of the second half of this psalm, yet we may be permitted to remark that, glorious as the music of the heavens is to those who have ears to hear, yet there is another message from the eternal throne, which alone tells us the thoughts God has *towards us*, and which, when understood and received, does touch our hearts and move our tongues to louder, sweeter, tenderer song than ever nature's glory could inspire.—C.

Vers. 8—14.—*The voice of Jehovah in his Word.* The Prophet Isaiah, in his forty-fifth chapter, and in the eighth and ninth verses, refers both to the work of God's hands in the world which he has created, and to the words of his lips in the promises he has made; and in both cases it is said, "not in vain." "Not in vain" is the earth formed; "not in vain" is the promise uttered. In both there is a Divine aim and purpose. That antithesis between the works and the Word of God is more ancient than Isaiah's day. It goes back to the time of Moses, who in the ninetyeth psalm speaks to God as the Ever-living One, the Framer of the earth, and yet the Refuge of his people. And between Moses and Isaiah, in this nineteenth psalm we have the like distinction drawn. Its first six verses refer to God's works in the world, the rest, to his words in the Word.<sup>2</sup> Seven lines of exposition are required for their unfolding.

I. THE HEAVENS SPEAK OF GOD; THE WORD DECLARES JEHOVAH. It is too commonly supposed that the use of the several words "Elohim" and "Jehovah" indicates a difference either of date, of document, or of authorship. There does not seem to us to be any adequate ground for such distinctions. As we in one and the same sermon or tract may use a dozen different names for God, why may it not have been so of old?<sup>3</sup> The word "Elohim" indicates God as the God of nature. The word "Jehovah" points to him as the revealed God of our fathers. And it is from our own revealed God that the Word proceeds, from the depths of his heart; it is far more

<sup>1</sup> See the closing chapter of Mr. Wallace's recent and valuable work on 'Darwinism' (1889); Mr. Fisk's 'Excursions of an Evolutionist,' ch. xi.; the introduction to Dr. Wilson's admirable work on 'Evolution;' and the Rev. W. Arthur's most powerful works on 'Religion without God,' and 'God without Religion.' There is a masterly volume by the Rev. Dr. Chapman, M.A., on 'Pre-organic Evolution, and the Biblical Idea of God' (Clark: 1891). Professor R. Watts's 'Reign of Causality' has some very powerful and close reasoning on this subject. The student will find a helpful summary of the views of ancient and modern philosophers on the idea of cause, in Rev. J. R. Thomson's 'Dictionary of Philosophy,' pp. 201, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> On the different styles of writing in this psalm, see 'Cambridge Bible.'

<sup>3</sup> In conversation with a learned Jew, the writer stated the views here given, and asked him, "Is there any reason, in your judgment, why this should not have been the case?" The answer was, "On the contrary, there is every reason why it should have been so. We Jews vary the name of God according to the conception of him which we wish at the time to convey."

than any works of his hands. Hence the change of the word "God" to the word "Jehovah."

II. JEHOVAH, THE REVEALED GOD, HAS PUT BEFORE US PRICELESS MATERIAL FOR OUR USE. There are six various terms to indicate this. *Law*; or the great body of truth in which God would have his people instructed. *Testimony*; or the Divine declaration as to what he is, has done, is doing, and will do. *Statutes*; or precepts, which indicate specific duty. *Commandments*; or rules for the regulation of the entire life. *Fear*; i.e. that fear of him, so repeatedly enjoined, and which in an infantine age was the predominant view of duty towards God. *Judgments*; the right-settings, in the Divine declarations pronounced against sin and in favour of righteousness. Let us put all these together, and lo! how rich are we in having all these voices from the eternal throne! But how much richer still are we in having the words of the New Testament economy superadded to those of the old!

III. THE WORDS OF JEHOVAH ARE AS REMARKABLE FOR QUALITY AS FOR VARIETY. The very names given to them are inspiring: "perfect," "sure," "right," "pure," "true," "righteous," "standing fast." These several terms may be gathered up into three—true in statement, right in direction, everlasting in their duration. Even so. In the words of God we have absolute truth. In the precepts of God we have perfect directories for life and duty. And we know that, change what may, time is on our side, for "the Word of the Lord endureth for ever." Note: The words of God in the Bible are the only ones to which these epithets apply. Then it will be a very serious mistake if in school education or family training we ever allow the Bible to be crowded out or set on one side. For we must note—

IV. THAT THE WORDS OF GOD ARE ADDRESSED TO THE INNERMOST PART OF OUR NATURE. (Ver. 7, "the soul.") Although this word, in Hebrew, is very frequently used in as free and popular a sense as it is with us, yet, on the other hand, it often denotes the highest part of our nature—even that which pertains to spirit, conscience, and to the regulation of the moral life of man. Such is the case here; as, indeed, the marvellous effects of the Divine Word (as pointed out under the next heading) plainly indicate. So much is this the case, that the Word is regarded even here as "dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow," and as a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Old Testament conceptions of man and of sin are very deep and very solemn.<sup>1</sup> As the late Dr. Duncan, Professor of Hebrew, rightly remarked,<sup>2</sup> "The Hebrew language is peculiarly rich in religious and moral terms, though scanty enough in others. The reason is evident—it chronicled a revelation."

V. THE EFFECT OF GOD'S WORDS ARE AS MARVELLOUS AS THEIR CONTENTS AND AIM. Some six of these are specified in the psalm. And one other is illustrated by its writer. The six effects referred to are: 1. *Converting the soul*. Restoring it, calling it back from its wanderings, and causing it to return to God and home. 2. *Making wise the simple*. Where the words of God are read, studied, appropriated, by an honest and upright heart, they will lead in the way of understanding, and make wise unto salvation. 3. *Rejoicing the heart*, by their disclosures of God's glory, grace, wealth, and love. To those who drink in the Word, God is their "exceeding Joy." 4. *Enlightening the eyes*. This may mean either illumination or refreshment,<sup>3</sup> restoring life and fainting energies (cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 24, 29). The former meaning, "illumination," is triply true; for God's commandments enlighten a man concerning God, duty, and himself. There is nothing like the searching Word to reveal to us what we are. 5. *Warning* is another effect. The exhortations to good and the dissuasion from evil are standing menaces of the peril of refusing the one and choosing the other. 6. *Reward*. No one can follow the commandments of God without ensuring a rich, ample, constant recompense.

Another effect of the Word of God is illustrated by the writer of this very psalm, who shows us the influence it had upon him. *It awoke from him an earnest, prayerful response, awakened by the sight of himself which the commandment gave.* The

<sup>1</sup> See 'Synonymes of the Old Testament,' by Rev. R. B. Girdlestone, obs. iv., v., vi.

<sup>2</sup> See his Life, by J. Brown, p. 406.

<sup>3</sup> See an interesting remark on this phrase in Mr. Fausset's 'Studies in the Psalms, lect. v. p. 25; and also in Perowue, *in loc.*

prayer is threefold—against involuntary, secret, and presumptuous sins. It is: 1. *Cleanse me*, which has a double meaning of “Pronounce me clean, and keep me so.” 2. *Keep me back*. It is a prayer that the restraining grace of God may keep in subjection a wayward and impulsive nature. 3. *Accept me*. (Ver. 14.) It is an earnest prayer that at the moment the Word reveals his guilt, the grace of God may cover it with the mantle of forgiving love, and receive him in spite of all his guilt. And to this prayer there is appended an earnest plea. The praying one invokes two of the names of God in which the Old Testament saints were wont most to delight, “My Rock” and “my Redeemer.” The word translated “Redeemer” is specially noticeable. It is *Goël*.<sup>1</sup> (For illustrations of the use of the former word, see Deut. xxxii. 4, 31; 2 Sam. xxii. 32; Pss. lxii. 2, 6, 7; lxxiii. 26; Isa. xxvi. 4. Of the latter, see (in Hebrew) Numb. xxxv. 12, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27; Job xix. 25; Isa. xli. 14; xliii. 14; lx. 16; lxxiii. 16.) Note: (1) How unspeakable is the mercy that, though our guilt might well make us dread the approach to a holy God, yet his grace is such that we may flee to him and find deliverance there! The same Word which unbares our sin also reveals his grace. (2) The revelation of God through the stars will not suffice for us; we want the word of promise too. (3) Those who most luxuriate in the Word should also, more than others, luxuriate in the works of God. (4) Those who accept both know perfectly well that nothing in the book of nature can run counter to the book of grace.—C.

Vers. 1—14.—*Nature as a preacher*. Mark—

I. THE GRAND SUBJECT. “The glory of God.”

II. THE SPLENDID AUDIENCE. “All the earth.”

III. THE FAITHFUL DELIVERY. Marked by truth, freshness, constancy, impartiality (vers. 1—4). Other preachers cannot continue by reason of death. Hence there is change. One succeeds another. But this preacher goes on without break or weariness from day to day and age to age, bearing witness for God (Rom. i. 20; Acts xiv. 17).

IV. THE DIVERSE RESULTS. Minds vary. Where there is freedom of thought, there will be difference of opinion. When Paul preached at Athens, “some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again on this matter. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed” (Acts xvii. 32—34). And so it is here. Some hear, and others hear not. Some recognize God’s presence and working, and give him praise, and others deny that in all they see there is anything more than the evolution of matter, and the play of cause and effect.

V. THE NECESSITY OF THE WORD. Nature can teach, but only such as are susceptible. It can proclaim the glory of God, but only to such as have already been brought to the knowledge of God. Our minds have been darkened and deadened by sin. Nature cannot tell us how sin is to be taken away. It is dumb as to a Saviour. It cannot inspire hope. It cannot convert the soul. Hence the necessity of the Word—of the Law by which is the knowledge of sin, and the gospel which reveals to us a Saviour. It is those who have been brought to the knowledge and love of God through Jesus Christ who are best able to appreciate the service of nature.—W. F.

Vers. 7—10.—*The Word of God*. This passage may be regarded as teaching three things concerning the Word of God, or the Bible.

1. WHAT IT IS. Six names are used, and six different statements are made with regard to the Bible. 1. It is “the Law of the Lord,” and, as such, it is “perfect.” 2. It is “the testimony of the Lord,” and, as such, it is “sure.” In it God speaks with solemn earnestness and insistence, and what he says may be trusted. 3. It is “the statutes of the Lord;” and the statutes of the Lord are “right.” The way of duty is clearly and unmistakably marked out. 4. It is the “commandment of the Lord.” It is not mere counsel or instruction, but has all the authority and awfulness of “commandment.” And as such it is “pure,” clear as crystal, illuminating as the light. 5. It is “the fear of the Lord.” This may stand for religion (Prov. xv. 33; cf. Deut. xvii. 19), and as such it is “pure and undefiled.” It is “our reasonable service.” 6. Lastly, the Bible is spoken of as “the judgments of the Lord.” This

<sup>1</sup> See article by present writer in ‘Pulpit Commentary’ on ‘Deuteronomy,’ p. 320; also Geikie’s ‘Hours with the Bible,’ iii. 14; vi. 306.

refers to the administration of the Law. God's "judgments," being the execution of his will, must be "true." Based upon the eternal principles of right, they must themselves be eternal.

II. WHAT THE BIBLE DOES. 1. "It converts the soul" (Ps. xxiii. 3; 1 Tim. i. 15). 2. It "makes wise the simple" (Ps. cxix. 130; Acts xvi. 31). 3. It "rejoices the heart" (Ps. cxix. 162; Acts viii. 39). 4. It "enlightens the eyes" (Ps. xvi. 11; Eph. i. 18, 19). 5. It "endureth for ever" (Ps. c. 5; 1 John ii. 14—17). What is here stated as doctrine is elsewhere illustrated as fact. It is, as we believe the doctrine, that we shall become witnesses to the facts (1 Cor. vi. 11; 1 Pet. i. 23—25).

III. WHAT THE BIBLE DESERVES. We have it in our hands. We have heard its character, and the claims made in its behalf, and what is our response? The language employed by the psalmist fitly expresses what our feelings and conduct should be, how we should treat God's most Holy Word. 1. It deserves to be *valued more than gold*. 2. It deserves to be *loved and delighted in* as "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." 3. It deserves to be *studied and obeyed* with increasing devotion; for thereby our minds are enlightened, and our lives illumined, and great is our reward in purity and peace and the love of God. And if we have learnt its preciousness ourselves, we shall surely labour to make it known to others, that they also may be enriched by its treasures and blessed with its joys.—W. F.

Vers. 1—10.—*God's revelation of himself in nature and in his Word.* In nature it is *continuous*. Day utters speech unto day, night unto night. It is *speechless*; it has a language, but it is not articulate. It is *universal*. Gone out through all the world, and through all time. In his *Word* it has a converting power—power to make wise, to rejoice the heart and enlighten the eyes. It endures for ever; unlike the firmament, and is entirely true and righteous.

I. A COMPARISON OF THESE TWO REVELATIONS. 1. *Both reveal God's glory.* The heavens reveal his glory by day and by night. But our solar system is but the glory of a single point of light, when compared with the glory of all the systems that fill infinite space. But *quality* rather than *quantity* is the test of the glory of any work. To redeem and reclaim a world of souls from the ruin of sin transcends the work of creating and sustaining all the suns and the stars of the universe; and this is the glory of God's Word. 2. *Both contain important instruction.* "Day unto day uttereth speech" (ver. 2). "The testimony of the Lord is sure [or, 'true'], making wise the simple." To the devout mind nature suggests more than it directly teaches—the Sun of Righteousness, the mighty Quickener and Joy of darkened souls. Christ the great *Bridegroom* of the Church. But the *Word* uttered by prophets, Christ, and inspired men, expels our ignorance upon the topics most necessary to our highest well-being. They make us truly wise. 3. *Both demand study and labour to enjoy their blessings.* Great things can benefit us only by the exercise of earnest and inquisitive thought. La Place and Newton thus came to understand the *science* of the heavens; Milton and others, their poetry; and David and others, their religion. We benefit by the Word in a similar way. Study leading to practice and experience will open its stores of truth to us.

II. A CONTRAST OF THESE REVELATIONS. 1. *The one universal, the other partial.* Every one not born blind has seen the heavens; there are millions who have never heard of Christ. God does some things by taking them entirely into his own hands; but he takes us as fellow-labourers in the work of making known his Word. 2. *The one is full of great spiritual energies; the other is not.* Material things can do only material work; nature cannot alter a depraved will or heal a wounded conscience. Spiritual forces must rouse spiritual natures like ours. Christ is the Word of God, and can give the highest deliverance and salvation which souls need. Makes us wise with the noblest wisdom, gives *light* to the mind. The one rejoices the senses, the other the heart. The mourner can be made to sing, the captive to leap for joy, the heart-broken to laugh with gladness, the penitent to receive peace. Nature can do nothing of this to any extent.—S.

Vers. 11—14.—*Man's relation to the Divine Law.* The former part of the psalm is a comparison and a contrast between God's revelation of himself in nature and in his

Law. Now the psalmist passes on to consider his own relation to the Divine Law; what light it throws upon his character and circumstances, and what rewards it bestows upon those who abide in the steadfast observance of it.

I. WHAT THE DIVINE LAW TAUGHT THE PSALMIST. (Vers. 12, 13.) 1. *His manifold sins and errors.* "Who can understand his errors?" Who can tell how often he offendeth? Our sins and mistakes are greater in number than we can understand or reckon. Our moral infirmity is greater than we can estimate. 2. *That he was largely an ignorant transgressor.* "Cleanse thou me from the sins that I know not of." Arising from self-deception and self-ignorance. Others see in us what we cannot see in ourselves. The proud and covetous and unjust do not think themselves so. Cleanse us from the pretence to virtues which we have not. 3. *To pray for deliverance from the temptation to deliberate sins.* That he might not commit presumptuous, wilful sin. He does not ask for the pardon of such sins, but to be restrained from them. "If we sin wilfully after that we have come to the knowledge of the truth," etc. No sacrifice in the Jewish Law for such sins.

II. THE LAW GREATLY REWARDS THE STEADFASTLY OBEDIENT. (Vers. 11, 14, 15.) 1. *By giving them an increasing spirit of consecration.* "Let my words and meditations and actions be more and more acceptable in thy sight." Obedience leads to further obedience, and longs for nothing short of being perfectly acceptable to God. 2. *By giving a more perfect consciousness of God's acquaintance with our thoughts and ways.* The whole passage shows that, as well as the fourteenth verse. The disobedient think they can hide their ways from God. "How doth God know?" The obedient know that all things are naked and open before him; and rejoice in the thought, because they are aiming at what is acceptable to him. 3. *By revealing God as a sure, faithful Redeemer from all evil.* A rock is the image of faithful stability, and means that God will not swerve from his promise of redemption. The disobedient are the unbelievers; they attribute their own mind to God, and so cannot trust him.—S.

Ver. 14.—*A sacrifice and a prayer.* "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer." Let us look at this language—

I. AS OFFERING A SACRIFICE. The thoughts and feelings of the soul uttered and unuttered. 1. *The sacrifice is spiritual.* Words and meditations. Man's heart is the most precious thing God has created—the jewel of the universe. The thoughts that come out of the heart and the words that utter them—these are the precious treasures the psalmist offers before God. 2. *The sacrifice is complete.* The words of the mouth and the meditation of the heart indicate *the whole man*. This is the Christian view of man's priestly work—the presenting of body and soul as living sacrifices. Not a partial offering of one part of our lives, nor of the outward apart from the inward life, but the total consecration of our whole being. 3. *This offering is not acceptable to God on its own account.* It is acceptable to God on account of the great expiatory sacrifice, and because *that* has brought us into a new and peculiar relation with God. Intrinsically, the offering is not acceptable. For all man's words taken together, what are they? Our words when they utter our most religious thoughts, our truest deepest faith, our most rapturous love, our triumphant hope and praise, are unworthy of being thus offered. But when you add the words of every day and every employment, these are vain, proud, irreligious, sometimes blasphemous. And then our thoughts! But God in Christ is pleased with our offering. A child's letter is pleasing to its father because it is his child's.

II. AS CONTAINING A PRAYER. Then what do they imply? 1. *That God alone can deliver him from the sins he prays against.* From secret and presumptuous sin. A faith is implied that God *would* so deliver him. They may have a wider meaning. 2. *That God is the Inspirer of right words and right thoughts.* "Make my words and thoughts such as shall be acceptable in thy sight."

III. THE WARRANT FOR OFFERING BOTH SACRIFICE AND PRAYER. The psalmist felt that God was his Rock and his Salvation. Stability and deliverance are the principal thoughts here.—S.



## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM XX.

THIS psalm seems to have been composed for a special occasion, when David was about to proceed on an expedition against a foreign enemy. It is liturgical, and written to be recited in the court of the tabernacle by the high priest and people. The date of its composition is after the transfer of the ark from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David (2 Sam. vi. 12—19), as appears from ver. 2. The conjecture which attaches it to the Syrian War described in 2 Sam. x. 17—19, is probable. There is no reason to doubt the authorship of David, asserted in the title, and admitted by most critics.

The psalm divides into two portions—the first of five, and the second of four verses. In the first part, the people chant the whole. In the second, the high priest takes the word, and initiates the strain (ver. 6), while the people join in afterwards (vers. 7—9).

Ver. 1.—The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble. The people intercede for their king in a “day of trouble” or “distress,” when danger impends, and he is about to affront it. They are made to ask, first of all, that God will hear the king’s prayers, which are no doubt being silently offered while they pray aloud. The Name of the God of Jacob defend thee. (On the force of the expression, “the Name of God,” see the comment upon Ps. vii. 17.) “Jacob’s God”—a favourite expression with David—is the God who made him the promise, “I will be with thee, and I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest” (Gen. xxviii. 15). “Defend thee” is scarcely a correct rendering. Translate, *exalt thee*.

Ver. 2.—Send thee help from the sanctuary. “The sanctuary” here is undoubtedly the holy place which David had established on Mount Zion, and in which he had placed the ark of the covenant. God’s help was always regarded as coming especially from the place where he had “set his Name.” In the original it is, “Send thy help”—the help thou needest and prayest for. And strengthen thee out of Zion; rather, *support thee*.

Ver. 3.—Remember all thy offerings. (On David’s offerings, see 2 Sam. vi. 13, 17; xxiv. 25; 1 Chron. xv. 26; xvi. 1; xxi. 28; xxix. 21.) It is not to be supposed, however, that David ever sacrificed victims with his

own hand, or without the intervention of a priest. And accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah. It is a reasonable conjecture that the “Selah” here marks a “pause,” during which special sacrifices were offered, with a view of entreating God’s favour and protection in the coming war (Hengstenberg).

Ver. 4.—Grant thee according to thine own heart; i.e. whatever thy heart desireth “in connection with this expedition, all that thou hopest from it, all that thou wouldst have it accomplish.” And fulfil all thy counsel; i.e. make all thy plans to prosper.

Ver. 5.—We will rejoice in thy salvation. David’s “salvation” is here his triumph over his enemies, which the people confidently anticipate, and promise themselves the satisfaction of speedily celebrating with joy and rejoicing. And in the Name of our God we will set up our banners. Plant them, i.e., on the enemy’s forts and strongholds. The Lord fulfil all thy petitions. A comprehensive prayer, re-echoing the first clause of ver. 1 and the whole of ver. 4, but reaching out further to all that the monarch may at any future time request of God. The first part of the psalm here ends, and the people pause for a while.

Ver. 6.—Now know I. The employment of the first person singular marks a change in the speaker, and is best explained by supposing that either the high priest or the king himself takes the word. The offering of the solemn prayer (vers. 1—5) and of the sacrifices (see the comment on ver. 3) has been followed by a full conviction that the prayer is granted, and the triumph of David assured. What was previously hoped for is “now known.” That the Lord saveth (or, *hath saved*) his anointed (comp. Ps. xviii. 50). He will hear him from his holy heaven; literally, *from the heaven of his holiness*. With the saving strength of his right hand. God will hear him, i.e., and, having heard him, will help and defend him “with the saving strength of his right hand.”

Ver. 7.—Some trust in chariots, and some in horses. The enemies of David towards the north—Syrians of Zobah, and Maachah, and Damascus, and Beth-Rehob—were especially formidable on account of their cavalry and their chariots. David on one occasion “took from Hadarzer, King of Zobah, a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen” (1 Chron. xviii. 4). On another he “slew of the Syrians seven thousand men which fought in chariots” (1 Chron. xix. 18). His own troops appear to have consisted entirely of footmen. But we will remember the Name of the Lord our

God. Our trust, *i.e.*, shall be in the Lord, who has commanded our kings "not to multiply horses" (Deut. xvii. 16).

Ver. 8.—They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright. Confident of the result, the speaker represents it as already achieved. He sees the enemy bowed down to the earth, and fallen; he sees the host of Israel erect and triumphant. All stands out clearly before his vision, as though he were an actual spectator of the fight.

Ver. 9.—Save, Lord! This punctuation is adopted by Delitzsch, Kay, Professor

Alexander, Hengstenberg, and our Revisers; but is opposed by Rosenmüller, Bishop Horsley, Ewald, Hupfeld, Cheyne, and the 'Speaker's Commentary.' It has the Hebrew Masoretic text in its favour, the Septuagint and Vulgate against it. Authorities are thus nearly equally balanced on the point; and we are at liberty to translate either, "Save, Lord: may the King hear us when we call!" or, "O Lord save the king: may he hear us when we call (upon him)!" On the whole, perhaps, the former is preferable (see the arguments of Professor Alexander, 'Commentary on the Psalms,' p. 94).

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 5.—*The safeguards of prayer.* "The Lord fulfil all thy petitions." An amazingly bold wish! Especially if you read it in the light of ver. 4, "Grant thee thy heart's desire!" It might be the worst wish we could express—even for a good man—that God would grant him *all* he desires. It is written of the rebellious, ungrateful Israelites, "He gave them their own desire." But it was their ruin (Ps. lxxviii. 29). We may be conscious of desires springing up in our own heart, even dwelling deep there, which, though we do not know them to be wrong, we ourselves would scarcely venture to put into our prayers. Nevertheless, this bold wish is not larger than our Saviour's promise to prayer (Matt. xxi. 22; John xiv. 13, 14). The text, therefore, suggests—

I. GOD'S INFINITE POWER TO ANSWER PRAYER. Nature, with its innumerable forms, mighty forces, all-comprehending laws, undisclosed secrets, is his. He designed, created, controls it. All hearts and lives are in his hand. All holy creatures do his will. With God all things are possible (Rom. viii. 28). To some minds, amazing difficulty and doubt beset this glorious fact, that God hears and answers prayer. The special stumbling-block, the objection most frequently urged, is that God *works by law*—governs all nature by unchanging law. Of course he does. So does man work by law; and, instead of governing, is governed by, the laws of nature. What then? This does not hinder men from answering prayer—granting, every minute, the requests of children, friends, customers, clients. Can anything, seriously considered, be more absurd than to suppose that God cannot do what he has enabled us to do?—that he has so made his universe that he cannot manage it; though, so far as our needs require, we can? Or is it anything less than childish narrowness of thought to suppose that, because we do not understand how the thing asked for can be done—the healing of a disease, *e.g.*, or averting a danger, or giving a prosperous wind to a ship, or converting a sinner—therefore God does not know how to effect it? If there is one lesson the discoveries of modern science should teach, it is that our ignorance is not the measure of possibility. It is no business of ours to scheme how God can grant our prayers; only to see to it, as far as we can, that they are such as he can wisely, justly, and for our true welfare, grant. Infinite power, guided by infinite wisdom and love, suffices. This brings us to speak of—

II. THE LIMITS AND SAFEGUARDS OF PRAYER. "All thy petitions" would be too bold and rash a wish, were there no tacit limitation, no fence of safety in the background. We cannot possibly be certain what is best for ourselves, even in the near future; still less how the granting of our petition would affect others. Much more ignorant are we of far-off results. Many a Christian looks back on the unwise prayers he offered, with shuddering thankfulness that his request was denied. Yet, at the time, it seemed so reasonable. In this ignorance we should not dare to pray—the hazard would be too great—if we knew that God would give what we asked, whether it were wise or foolish, right or wrong. "With God all things are possible;" but it is certain he will do nothing but what is wise and good. He will not grant his child's request to his ruin, or to the breaking off of his own gracious purpose (Ps. cxxxviii. 8). It is

ours to ask, his to judge. Therefore we may ask boldly, never forgetting, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

III. THE PLEA AND WARRANT OF OUR PRAYERS IS THE ALL-PREVAILING INTERCESSION OF CHRIST. The title "Anointed" (ver. 6)—"Messiah"—though often applied to David and his descendants, suggests a higher application (as in Ps. ii. 7, 8). So the best Jewish as well as Christian interpreters (comp. John ii. 41, 42). His prayers must always be in perfect accord with both the mind and the will of God, his wisdom and his goodness. When he says to the weakest disciple, "I have prayed for thee" (Luke xxii. 32), that disciple cannot perish. Our weak, unworthy prayers are mighty and acceptable in his Name (John xv. 7; xvi. 23, 24). The glory of heaven is waiting to fulfil his prayer (John xvii. 20—24).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Prayer for Israel's king when going forth to battle: a national sermon.* In this psalm, as indeed in the rest, there are most suggestive verses, which might be elaborated into useful discourses.<sup>1</sup> But in this division of the Commentary we refrain from dealing with isolated texts. We desire rather to show how *the whole psalm* may be used by the expositor of Scripture as the basis of a national sermon in a time of impending war. No doubt, as Mr. Spurgeon remarks, it has been used by court preachers and pressed into the service of unctuous and fulsome flattery. There is, however, another kind of abuse to which it has been subjected, even that of an extreme spiritualizing, in which the words are made to convey a meaning which there is no indication that they were ever intended to bear. No commentator seems to have set forth the bearing of the psalm more clearly and accurately than that prince of expositors, John Calvin. We have no clue, indeed, to the precise occasion on which the psalm was written; but we can scarcely be wrong in regarding it as a prayer to be said or sung in the sanctuary on behalf of the king when he was called forth to defend himself in battle against his enemies. And inasmuch as the kingship of David was a type of that of the Lord Jesus Christ, the psalm may doubtless be regarded as the prayer of the Church of God for the triumph of the Saviour over all his foes. It is said, "Prayer also shall be made for him continually," and those words are being fulfilled in the ceaseless offering of the petition, "Thy kingdom come." At the same time, there is such deep and rich significance in the psalm when set on the strictly historical basis, that to develop it from that point of view will occupy all the space at our command. The scenes here brought before us are these:<sup>2</sup> Israel's king is summoned to go forth to war; sanctuary service is being held on his behalf; a prayer is composed, is set to music, and delivered to the precentor, to be said or sung on the occasion; after sacrifices have been offered, and the signs of Divine acceptance have been vouchsafed, the Levites, the singers, and the congregation join in these words of supplication. Obviously, there is here assumed<sup>3</sup> a Divine revelation; the aid of Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, is invoked; he is called, "Jehovah *our* God." The disclosures of God's grace in the wondrous history of their father Jacob are brought to mind. They, as a people, have been raised above reliance on chariots and horses alone. The Name of their God has lifted them up on high, "as in a fortress where no enemy can do harm, or on a rock at the foot of which the waves fret and dash themselves in impotent fury."<sup>4</sup> They know of two sanctuaries—one in Zion (ver. 2), the other "the heaven of God's holiness" (ver. 6); they know that God hears *from* the latter, when his people gather *in* the former. Hence the prayer is sent up from the sanctuary below to that above. We, as Christians, have all Israel's knowledge, and more. The revelation the Hebrews had through Moses is surpassed by that in Christ. And although, as a

<sup>1</sup> Forrest's edition of Dr. Forbes's 'Studies on the Book of Psalms' (1833), pp. 256, 257, and Dr. Maclaren's 'Life of David as reflected in the Psalms,' contain hints worth noting on this psalm.

<sup>2</sup> See Bishop Perowne's interesting arrangement of the verses of this psalm.

<sup>3</sup> See our introductory homily on the several classes of psalms.

<sup>4</sup> So Perowne.

"geographical expression," no nation now has the pre-eminence over any other as before God, yet any praying people can get as near to God now as ever Israel did. All devout souls have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Hence, when any trouble—especially that of war—befalls them, they may betake themselves to their God, and plead with him on behalf of their emperor, their king, their president, their state. And the psalm before us is truly a grand one for preachers to use at such emergencies, that they may cheer a people's heart, quicken the people's prayers. The abuse of the psalm by some courtiers, who feared man rather than God, is no reason why the preachers of any day should leave such a psalm unused, still less is it a reason why they should refuse to preach national sermons at all. For a long time, Non-conformists were so treated, that some of their preachers almost lost the national *esprit de corps*. But it is to be hoped that that is passing away; for on the basis of a psalm like this, some lines of thought may be so expounded and applied from the pulpit as to cause times of national peril and anxiety to be most fruitful in spiritual elevation and power.

I. IT IS AN ANXIOUS TIME FOR ANY PEOPLE WHEN THE HEAD OF THEIR STATE IS CALLED FORTH TO BATTLE. (See 2 Chron. xx. 1—3.) The interests at stake in the conflict itself, and for the promotion of which it is entered upon, must press heavily on the nation's heart. The fearful bloodshed and unspeakable suffering and distress in private life, which any battle involves, must bring anguish to many mothers, wives, and children; many a home will be darkened, and many a heart crushed, through the war, however large the success in which it may ultimately result.

II. WHEN WARS ARE ENTERED UPON PERFORCE, FOR A RIGHT OBJECT, THE PEOPLE MAY LAY BEFORE THEIR GOD THE BURDEN THAT IS ON THEIR HEARTS. (2 Chron. xx. 5—15.) There is a God. He is our God. He has a heart, tender as a father's, and a hand gentle as a mother's; while, with all such pitying love, he has a strength that can speed worlds in their course. Nothing is too large for him to control; nought too minute for him to observe. And never can one be more sure of a gracious response than when, with large interests at stake, a people are united as one in spreading before the throne of God their case with all its care. If "the very hairs of our head" are all numbered, how much more the petitions of the heart!

III. AT SUCH TIMES THE INTENSEST SYMPATHIES OF THE PEOPLE GATHER ROUND THEIR ARMY AND THEIR THRONE. (Ver. 5.) "We will rejoice in *thy* deliverance," etc. Whatever may have been the sentiment in bygone times, we now know that the king is for the people, not the people for the king. Hence *his* victory or defeat is theirs. The soldiers, too, who go forth loyally and obediently to the struggle, with their lives in their hands, leaving at home their dear ones weeping as they leave them lest they should see the loved face no more, how can it but be that a nation's warmest, strongest sympathies should gather round them as they go to the war?

IV. THE NAME OF GOD IS A STRONGER DEFENCE TO SUCH A PEOPLE THAN ALL MATERIAL FORCES CAN COMMAND. (Vers. 6, 7.) This is so in many senses. 1. God himself can so order events as to ensure the victory to a praying people, however strong and numerous the foes. 2. An army sent out with a people's prayers, knowing that it is so sustained, will fight the more bravely. 3. To the generals in command, God can give, in answer to prayer, a wisdom that secures a triumphant issue. 4. All chariots and horsemen are at his absolute disposal, and he can cause them all to vanish in an hour. The army of Sennacherib. The Spanish Armada. History is laden with illustrations of Divine interposition (Ps. cvii. 43).

V. WHEN THE PEOPLE TRUSTINGLY LAY THE WHOLE MATTER BEFORE GOD, THEY MAY PEACEFULLY LEAVE IT TO HIM AND CALMLY AWAIT THE RESULT. (Of. ver. 8.) When once their affairs are rolled over on God, they are on his heart, and will be controlled by his hand on their behalf. Hence the wonderfully timely word of Jahaziel (2 Chron. xx. 15), "The battle is not yours, but God's." Such a thought may well inspire the people with the calmness of a holy courage, and may well lead them patiently to wait and see "the end of the Lord." Note: By such devotional use of national crises, they may become to a nation a holy and blessed means of grace; whereby the people at large may learn more of the value and power of prayer than in many a year of calm, and may be drawn more closely together for ever through a fellowship in trouble and in prayer.—C.

Ver. 1.—*"The day of trouble."* Such a day comes sooner or later to all. Nations have their "day of trouble," when they are visited with pestilence, famine, or war, or torn by internal strifes. Individuals also have their "day of trouble" (Job v. 6, 7). Trouble is a test. It shows what manner of persons we are. Happy are we, if, like the king and people of this psalm, trouble brings us nearer to God and to one another in love and service! The day of trouble should—

I. **DRIVE THE SOUL TO GOD.** In prosperity there are many helps, but in adversity there is but one. God is the true Refuge. His ear is ever open, and can "hear." His hand is ever stretched out, and can "defend." His resources are infinite, and he can "strengthen us out of Zion." The name here given to God, "the God of Jacob," is richly suggestive. It holds out hope to the sinful; for God was very merciful to Jacob. It assures comfort to the distressed; for God was with Jacob, to keep him during all his wanderings. It encourages trust, for God had a gracious purpose with Jacob, and made all the trials of his life contribute to his moral advancement. "Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God!" (Ps. cxlvi. 5).

II. **BRING ALL THE GOOD TOGETHER IN HOLY SERVICE.** In face of a common danger, there is a tendency to unite. So "Pilate and Herod were made friends" (Luke xxiii. 12). So Jehoshaphat and the King of Israel entered into alliance (1 Kings xxii. 2). So, in a nobler way, God's people come together for mutual edification and comfort, and to call upon the Name of the Lord (Mal. iii. 16). The Jews had the temple and the sacrifices, and the high priest to plead for them. But we have greater privileges. For us our great High Priest, "having offered one sacrifice for sin for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Heb. x. 12, 13). We have common dangers and needs, and can do much to help one another. When David was in trouble in the wood of Ziph, Jonathan went down to him, and strengthened his hands in God. When Peter was in prison, and in peril of death, "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him" (Acts xii. 5). When the Jerusalem Christians were in sore straits, the sympathies of their fellow-Christians in happier circumstances were called forth in their behalf (Rom. xv. 26). So when the truth is assailed, and the interests of the kingdom are endangered, it is the duty of all true lovers of Christ to band together, and by prayer and holy effort to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints."

III. **STRENGTHEN OUR ATTACHMENT TO THE SUPREME PRINCIPLES OF RIGHT.** There are many things dear to us which we may have to defend, but we must make a difference. "The day of trouble" is a searching and a sifting time. In drawing near to God, and by mutual warnings, we find out what is really of the highest value; what we may let go, and what we should keep; what we may safely relinquish, and what we should fight for to the last gasp; what is only of temporary or of secondary importance, and what is essential and more to be valued than all worldly and personal advantages, or even life itself (Dan. iii. 16—18; Acts iv. 18—20).

IV. **PREPARE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE COMING VICTORY OF GOOD OVER EVIL.** Waiting upon God gives hope. Praying and working inspire confidence. Imagination, kindled by the thought of God's Name, portrays in glowing colours the near deliverance. There is something very inspiring in the "I know" of the psalmist. Job says, "I know" (Job xix. 25); Paul says, "I know" (2 Tim. i. 12); and so we may join with the psalmist in saying, "Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed." We are too apt to think only of our troubles; but let us rather "remember the Name of the Lord." We are too ready to wish the defeat of our opponents, but let us rather seek the vindication of truth and the triumph of right, and, if God will, the transformation of foes into friends, so that they, as well as we, may share in the joy of the great day.—W. F.

Vers. 1—9.—*Help from the sanctuary for the battle of life.* A liturgical psalm, which was sung on behalf of the king, who was about to go forth to battle. It was chanted in alternate voices by the congregation and the priest or Levite who led the choir. As the king stands within the sanctuary, offering his sacrifice, the crowd of worshippers in the spacious courts lift up their voices in the prayer of the first five verses; then the answering chant of the priest or leader from vers. 6 to 8; then all join in the

prayer of the ninth verse, "God save the king!" *Help from the sanctuary for the battle of life.* Influences to be gathered there.

I. A SENSE OF GOD'S HELPFUL RELATIONS TO US. (Vers. 1, 2.) He hears in trouble, defends us in danger, and strengthens us for conflict; and thus helps us by means of the worship of the sanctuary. It is thus he remembers our offerings and accepts our worship.

II. GOD GRANTS THE DESIRES AND FULFILLS THE COUNSELS WHICH ARE INSPIRED IN HIS SERVICE. (Ver. 4.) "If we ask anything according to his will, we know that he heareth us."

III. WE CAN WIN THE BATTLE ONLY SO FAR AS WE REALIZE THAT IT IS GOD'S BATTLE. (Ver. 5.) "In the Name of our God must we set up our banners." He is the Captain of our salvation, and if we are loyal to him we shall rejoice in a victorious cause.

IV. TRUE FAITH IN GOD IS ASSURED OF VICTORY BEFORE THE BATTLE IS FOUGHT. (Ver. 6.) "I know whom I have believed, and . . . that he is able to keep that," etc.; "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory!" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

V. "RIGHT IS MIGHT" TO ALL WHO HAVE BEEN TAUGHT OF GOD. (Vers. 7, 8.) They do not trust in material strength, but in the justice of their cause, *i.e.* in the power of God, and not in chariots and horses. God, therefore, is not, in any historical war, on the side of the strongest battalions. "They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright."

VI. THE PERSISTENT AND FINAL CRY OF THE TRUE WORSHIPPER IS FOR THE SALVATION OF GOD. (Ver. 9.)—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXI.

PS. XXI is generally regarded as a companion composition to PS. XX, being the thanksgiving after the victory for which the preceding psalm was the supplication. It consists of three parts: (1) a direct thanksgiving to God, offered by the people on behalf of the king (vers. 1—7); (2) an address to the king, auguring for him future successes on the ground of his recent victory (vers. 8—12); and (3) a brief return to direct praise of God in two short ejaculatory sentences. Part 1 is interrupted by a pause ("Selah") at the end of ver. 2, when thank-offerings may have been made. The Davidical authorship, asserted in the title, is not seriously disputed.

Ver. 1.—The king shall joy. The future is used to give the idea of continuance, "The king rejoices, and will go on rejoicing." In thy strength, O Lord; *i.e.* in the strength that thou puttest forth to help and protect him (comp. PS. XX. 6). And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! God's "salvation" had been confidently anticipated (PS. XX. 5, 6, 9), and has now been experienced.

Ver. 2.—Thou hast given him his heart's desire (comp. PS. XX. 4, "Grant thee according to thine own heart"). And hast not

withholden the request of his lips. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The deliverance from his enemies, which David had earnestly desired in his heart, he had also devoutly requested with his lips (PS. XX. 1, 5). *Selah.* The pause here may have been for the presentation of a thank-offering.

Ver. 3.—For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness; *i.e.* thou givest him blessings before he asks, and more than he asks. "The blessings of goodness" is pleonastic, since a blessing cannot be otherwise than a good. Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. It is remarked that David, as the result of one of his wars, did actually take the crown of the conquered king, which was a crown of gold, from off the king's head, and place it upon his own head (2 Sam. xii. 30); but this is scarcely what is intended here. As Hengstenberg observes, "The setting on of the crown marks the bestowment of dominion," not in one petty case only, but generally, and is scarcely to be altogether separated from the promises recorded in 2 Sam. vii. 12—16.

Ver. 4.—He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. The "life" intended cannot be ordinary human life, since in David's case this certainly did not continue "for ever and ever." We must understand the psalmist to have asked for continuance in his posterity, and this was guaranteed him

in the message which God sent him by Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 13, 16). In the full sense the promise was, of course, Messianic, being fulfilled only in Christ, the God-Man, who alone of David's posterity "liveth for ever."

Ver. 5.—His glory is great in thy salvation. David's glory exceeds that of all other living men, through the "salvation" which God vouchsafes him. That salvation is partly temporal, consisting in deliverance from his foes; partly of an unearthly and spiritual character, arising out of his relationship to the coming Messiah. It is from the latter point of view, rather than the former, that it is said, Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

Ver. 6.—For thou hast made him most blessed for ever; literally, *for thou settest him to be blessings for ever*. Thou makest him, i.e., to be a perennial source of blessings to men. As all mankind were blessed in Abraham (Gen. xii. 3; xviii. 18; xxii. 18), i.e. in his seed, so were they all blessed in David's seed. Thou hast made him exceedingly glad with thy countenance; i.e. with thy favour and protection, so frequently and so markedly extended to him.

Ver. 7.—For the king trusteth in the Lord. This is at once the ground and the result of God's favour to him. God favours David because of his trust, and David trusts in God because of his favour. The result is that, through the mercy (or, *loving-kindness*, Revised Version) of the Most High he shall not be moved (comp. Ps. xv. 5; cxli. 6). The words appear to denote a conviction, as Professor Alexander says, that David "would never be shaken from his standing in God's favour." This conviction we may well conceive him to have felt, and to have regarded as one that might fittingly be expressed by his subjects, in whose mouth he placed it. But such a conviction is not always borne out by events, and David confesses elsewhere, that, at any rate, once in his life, after he had said, "I shall never be moved," God "hid away his face from him," and he "was troubled" (Ps. xxx. 6, 7).

Vers. 8—12.—In this second portion of the psalm, the people address themselves to David, anticipating future glories for him. "Having shown what God would do for his anointed, the psalm now describes what the latter shall accomplish through Divine assistance" (Alexander). Past success is taken as a guarantee of victory over all other enemies.

Ver. 8.—Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; i.e. "shall reach them, at-

tain them, punish them" (comp. 1 Sam. xxxi. 3). Thy right hand (the hand of greater power) shall find out those that hate thee; and, of course, punish them severely.

Ver. 9.—Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger. Some suppose a reference to the event mentioned in 2 Sam. xii. 31, "He (David) made them (the Ammonites) to pass through the brick-kiln;" but the expression "fiery oven" is probably not intended to be taken literally, but metaphorically. Severe suffering is continually compared in Scripture to confinement in an oven or furnace (see Deut. iv. 20; 1 Kings viii. 51; Isa. xlviii. 10; Jer. xi. 4; Ezek. xxii. 18, 20, 22; Mal. iv. 1). And we may best understand the present passage to mean simply that in the time of his anger David would subject such of his enemies as fell into his hands to very terrible sufferings. (See, as showing what extreme severities David did sometimes inflict on captured enemies, 2 Sam. xii. 31 which is to the point, as also is 1 Kings xi. 15, 16.) The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. The metaphor is followed up, with the addition that what was previously attributed to David alone is here declared to have the sanction of God.

Ver. 10.—Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth; i.e. their offspring or progeny. Joab, by David's orders, remained in Edom "until he had cut off every male" (1 Kings xi. 16). And their seed from among the children of men. The second clause, as so often, re-echoes the first, without adding anything to it.

Ver. 11.—For they intended evil against thee. Their destruction is brought upon them by their own selves. They plot against the people of God, and thus provoke God to anger, and cause him to deliver them into their enemy's hand. It does not matter that they can effect nothing. The "intention" is enough. They imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform. The inability is not so much from a deficiency of strength in themselves, as from the opposition offered to their schemes by God. The best-laid plans are powerless, if God wills to baffle them.

Ver. 12.—Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back; literally, *their neck* (comp. Ps. xviii. 40). The meaning is simply, "Thou shalt put them to flight." When thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them. The Authorized Version, by supplying "when" and "thine arrows," expresses what the psalmist has left to the intelligence of the reader. The psalmist says, "Thou shalt put them to flight; thou shalt

make ready upon thy strings against the face of them," no doubt meaning that the discharge of arrows would produce the hasty flight, but not saying it.

Ver. 13.—Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength. The psalm, as already remarked, ends, as it began, with the praise

of God. "Be thou exalted" means, "Be thou lifted up, both in thyself, and in the praises of thy people" (comp. Ps. xviii. 46; xli. 10). So will we sing and praise thy power. We, at any rate, will do our part to exalt thee. Our tongues shall ever sing of the great deeds thou doest for us.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*The triumph of victory.* "Thou hast given him his heart's desire." We seem to hear in this psalm the trumpets and harps and shawms of the temple, and jubilent voices of Levites praising God for some great victory. Joy-bells are rung and *Te Deum laudamus* chanted because the king has come home in triumph. The psalm is closely connected with the preceding one. *There* we see the king going forth to war, consecrating his banner and trusting his cause to God. The Church prays, "The Lord hear thee . . . grant thee according to thine own heart" (Ps. xx. 1—4). *Here* it triumphs in victory, and praises God as the Hearer of prayer. Whether the psalm refers to some special victory of David or any of his successors; or whether it be applied to Christ and his kingdom, the practical spiritual lessons we may draw from it are the same. One of the greatest Jewish commentators says, "Our ancient doctors interpreted this psalm of King Messiah; but against the heretics (Christians) it is better to understand it of David" (Rashi, quoted by Perowne). Take up briefly the leading thoughts which the text naturally suggests.

I. DESIRE IS THE MAINSPRING OF LIFE. Could the infinite multitude of desires, good or bad, transient or constant, noble or base, loving or selfish, which at this moment agitate human hearts, all cease, and be replaced by dull apathy, hope and effort would die. The whole busy drama of life would come to a dead stand, like an engine stopping when the fire is burnt out. Because so many of these desires are either wrong or ill-regulated, the word "lust"—often used in our English Bible, originally meaning simply "pleasure" or "desire"—has come to have an ill meaning. St. James puts his finger on these ungoverned discordant desires as the source of all the strife that disturbs the world (Jas. iv. 1, 2). If all hearts submitted their desires to reason and God's law, the world would be one vast peace society. Vexatious litigation and unfair competition would be unknown.

II. THEREFORE OUR HEART'S DESIRE IS THE TEST OF OUR CHARACTER. Not what a man says and does, but what he *would like* to say and do, if he could and dared, decide his character. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." From the momentary wish, too unreasonable or too languid to stir us to action, to the deep steadfast purpose which rules a life, our desires mark us for what we are, and mould us to what we shall be. Find what it is you deeply and habitually desire, and you have the key to your characters (Prov. xix. 22).

III. DESIRE IS THE SOUL OF PRAYER. If we do not present to God *our heart's desire*, we do not pray. Words without desire are not living prayer, only a dead form. Desire without words may be the truest, highest kind of prayer (Rom. viii. 26). Here is the peril of even the best forms of prayer. Their benefit is that they help to put our best desires into better words than we could find for ourselves; and by the power of association, as well as aptness, quicken our desires and instruct us what we *ought* to desire. Their danger is that we may mistake form and habit for life and spirit—a danger not confined to set forms. *Extempore* prayer may be as heartless and lifeless as a Tartar prayer-mill. Our own private prayers may degenerate into dead forms. Every earnest Christian (I suppose) is aware of this danger. When men came to our Saviour, his question was not "What have you to say?" but "What *will* thou that I should do unto thee?" What is thy *heart's desire*?

IV. The whole world of human desire is OPEN TO GOD'S EYE. Heart-secrets are no secrets to him (Jer. xvii. 9, 10). The silent wish that flashed to the surface of consciousness, soaring up into light, or plunging, like a guilty thing, into darkness—God saw it; sees it still. The passionate longing, so timid yet so strong that the heart would die sooner than betray it, is to him as though proclaimed with sound of



trumpet. No wish so sudden, strange, ambitious, as to take him by surprise. No lawful desire but he has provided for its satisfaction, either in creatures or in his own uncreated fulness. And unlawful desires are so, not because he forbids anything really good for us, but because they mean our harm, not happiness. This *perfect Divine knowledge* of all our desires, and of the wisdom or unwisdom of granting them, is not confined, remember, to the moment when we become conscious of them, or present them in prayer. *They are foreseen.* For the most part—perhaps, if we knew all, in every case—an answer to prayer implies *preparation*. Our prayer for “daily bread” is answered out of the fulness of last year’s harvest—the fruit of all harvests since corn was first reaped and sown. This abyss of *Divine foreknowledge* utterly confounds our intellect; yet to doubt it would be to doubt if God is God. *Why* then, with this boundless knowledge—foreknowledge—of all our desires and the conditions of their fulfilment, *has God appointed prayer?* Why does his Word show it to us as the very heart of religion? Partly, we may venture to say, because *God delights* to answer prayer. If not, it would scarcely be true—at least intelligible—that “God is love.” Partly because blessings are doubly, nay, tenfold, precious when they come in answer to prayer; a strong help to faith, a spur to hope, an assurance of God’s love, and powerful motive to love (Prov. xiii. 19). But supremely (I venture to think) in order that what is deepest, innermost, strongest, in our nature—our “heart’s desire”—should bring us closest to God; make us intensely feel our dependence on him; be consecrated, being offered to him in prayer.

V. Thank God, OUR HEART’S DESIRES—how large, lofty, pure, reasonable, soever—ARE NOT THE MEASURE OF GOD’S GIVING; do not circumscribe his willingness, any more than his power. He is “able to do exceeding abundantly,” etc. (Eph. iii. 20). If men’s desires are like the sea, his mercy is the shore. His chiefest, “his unspeakable Gift” came in answer to no desire of human hearts or prayer from human lips. “God so loved” a prayerless, thankless, godless “world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” *This Gift* has given us a new measure of expectation (Rom. viii. 32). What is more vital, it has opened a new fountain of desire in our hearts, and thereby enlarged, deepened, exalted, the whole scope of our life. Desire to be *like* Christ, to *glorify* Christ, to be *with* Christ,—these three give to life a new meaning, purpose, hope. If these be our heart’s desires, they are secure of fulfilment, because they are in agreement with God’s most glorious Gift, his most merciful purpose, his most precious promises. Here, as everywhere, our Saviour has left us an example, that we should follow his steps. We know what the supreme consuming desire of his heart was John iv. 34. In the midst of life and usefulness, he longed for death; not as an escape from this world, but as the accomplishment of his destined work (Luke xii. 50; John x. 17, 18). “For the joy,” etc. (Heb. xii. 2). In your salvation and mine he sees “of the travail of his soul” (Isa. liii. 24).

CONCLUSION. We are furnished with a *practical test*—first, of our desires; secondly, of our prayers. Our desires (we said) are the index to our character. Will they fit into our prayers? Are they such that we can come with boldness to the throne of grace through the blood of Jesus, and say, “Lord, all my desire is before thee” (Pa. xxxviii. 9; Isa. xxvi. 8)? Prayer (we said) is living, real, worth offering, only as it is the utterance of our desires, the pouring out of our heart. Are our prayers such a true outbreathing of our “heart’s desire”? Suppose, when you have joined in some high-toned hymn, or prayed in the earnest words of some ancient saint, a voice from heaven were to ask, “Do you mean what you say?” would it be for good or ill, here and hereafter, if God indeed granted your heart’s desire?

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*A royal thanksgiving for answers to prayer.* (For a day of national thanksgiving.) We fail to see, in the structure of this psalm, sufficient indications of its being the counterpart of the preceding one, to lead us to call it a *Te Deum*, to be sung on returning from battle as victor. It would equally well suit other occasions on which the grateful hearts of king and people desired to render praises in the house of God for mercies received; e.g. ver. 4 would be equally adapted to the recovery of the king from sickness. Its precise historic reference it is, however, now impossible to

ascertain; but this is of comparatively small importance. That the psalm is meant for a public thanksgiving is clear; and thus, with differences of detail in application thereof according to circumstances, it may furnish a basis for helpful teaching on days of national rejoicing over the mercies of God. We must, however, carefully avoid two errors in opening up the hid treasure of this psalm. We must not interpret it as if its references were only temporal, nor as if we lost sight of the supernatural revelation and of the Messianic prophecies which lie in the background thereof; nor yet, on the other hand, may we interpret its meaning as if the religious knowledge or conceptions of Israel's king were as advanced as the thoughts of Paul or John. *E.g.* "His glory is great in thy salvation." If we were to interpret this word "salvation" as meaning, primarily, the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, we should be guilty of an *anachronism*. Its first meaning is, rescue from impending trouble or danger. This, however, may be regarded as prophetic of the triumph awaiting the Church's King; but our exposition will be sure and clear only as we begin with the historic meaning, and then move carefully forward. The prayers and thanksgivings of a people cannot rise above the level of inspiration and revelation which marked the age in which they lived. We, indeed, may now set our devotions into another form than that which is represented by vers. 8—12; and, indeed, we are bound so to do. For since revelation is progressive, devotion should be correspondingly progressive too. So that if the remarks we make on the psalm are in advance of the thinkings of believers in David's time, let us remember that this is because we now look at all events and read all truth in the light of the cross, and not because we pretend to regard such fulness of meaning as belonging to the *original* intention of the psalm. There are here six lines of exposition before us.

**I. HERE IS THE RECALL OF A TIME OF TROUBLE — OF TROUBLE WHICH GATHERED ROUND THE PERSON OF THE KING.** (Ver. 1.) We cannot decide (nor is it important that we should) what was the precise kind of anxiety which had been felt. The word "life" in the fourth verse may indicate that some sickness had threatened the life of the king. The word "deliverance" and the allusions to "enemies" rather point to peril from hostile forces. Either way, when a monarch's life is threatened, either through sickness or war, the burden is very heavy on the people's heart. The first cause of anxiety was felt in Hezekiah's time; the second, often and notably in the days of Jehoshaphat.

**II. THE TROUBLE LED TO PRAYER.** We gather from the contents of the psalm that the specific prayer was for the king's life, either by way of recovery from sickness or of victory in war. Note: Whatever is a burden on the hearts of God's people may be laid before God in prayer. Prayer may and should be specific; and even though our thought, desires, and petitions in prayer may be very defective, still we may tell to God all we feel, knowing that we shall never be misunderstood, and that the answer will come according to the Father's infinite wisdom, and not according to our defects; yea, our God will do abundantly for us above all that we can ask or think. Hence we have to note—

**III. THE PRAYER BROUGHT AN ANSWER.** The trust of the praying ones was not disappointed (cf. vers. 2—7). The jubilant tone of the words indicates that the prayer had not been barely, but overflowing answered. God's good things had gone far ahead of the petitions, and had even anticipated the king's wishes and wants (ver. 3). "Life" had been asked; and God had granted "length of days for ever and ever." This cannot refer to the personal earthly life of any human king; the meaning is that in the deliverance vouchsafed there had been a new confirmation of that "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," wherein God had promised to establish David's throne for *ever* (Pss. lxi. 6; cxxxii. 11—14). Dr. Moll says,<sup>1</sup> "I find here the strongest expression of the assurance of faith in the personal continuance of the life of those who hold fast to the covenant of grace in living communion with Jehovah." Yea, the old Abrahamic covenant has been again confirmed. "Thou hast made him to be blessings for ever" (see Revised Version margin). So that this deliverance thus celebrated in Hebrew song is at once a development of God's gracious plan, and the answer to a king's and a people's prayer! "Thou settest a crown of pure gold upon his head" (ver 3; cf. 2 Sam. xii. 30).

<sup>1</sup> See Schaaf's *Lange*, 'Old Testament Psalms,' p. 162; and Fausset's 'Studies,' p. 109.

IV. NEW ANSWERS TO PRAYER INSPIRED NEW HOPE. (Ver. 7.) "Through the loving-kindness of the Most High he shall not be moved" (cf. Pss. xxiii. 6; lxiii. 7). He who proves himself to be our Refuge to-day, thereby proves himself our Refuge for every day.

V. THE PROVIDENTIAL INTERPOSITIONS IN ANSWER TO PRAYER AFFORDED NEW ILLUSTRATIONS OF GOD'S WORKS AND WAYS. (Vers. 8—13.) God is what he is. He remains "the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." But he cannot *seem* the same to his enemies as to his friends; *the same events* which fulfil the hopes of his friends are the terror and dread of his foes. This general principle is always true: it must be (ver. 10); and side by side with the Divine provision for the continuance of good, there is the Divine provision for shortening the entail of evil (see Exod. xx. 6, Revised Version margin; and Deut. vii. 9). But we are not bound in our devotions to single out others as the enemies in whose overthrow and destruction we could rejoice. At the same time, it is but just to the Hebrews to remember that they were the chosen people of God, and from their point of view, and with their measure of light, they regarded their enemies as God's enemies (see Ps. cxxxix. 22). The way David sometimes treated his foes can by no means be justified.<sup>1</sup> The views of truth which God's people hold are often sadly discoloured by the conventionalisms of their time; and David was no exception thereto. We may pray for the time when Zion's King "shall have put all enemies under his feet," and even praise him for telling us that it will be so. But we may surely leave all details absolutely with him.

VI. THE EVER-UNFOLDING DISCLOSURES OF WHAT GOD IS MAY WELL CALL FORTH SHOUTS OF JOYOUS SONG. (Ver. 13.) When we have such repeated illustrations of God's loving-kindness, mercy, and grace, we can feel unfeigned delight in singing of his *power*. What rapturous delight may we have in the thought that—

"The voice which rolls the stars along  
Speaks all the promises;"

that the same Being who is most terrible to sin, is infinitely gracious to the sinner, and that to all who trust him he is their "exceeding Joy"—C.

Vers. 1—13.—"*Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.*" This psalm concerns the king. But the question is which king? It may have been David. There is much that might apply to him. Perhaps on his recovery from some sickness, or on his return from some signal victory over his enemies, or on the occasion of his birthday or some great anniversary, David and his people may have rejoiced before the Lord with the voice of joy and praise. But a greater than David is here. If the psalm in part is true of David, it finds its highest and most complete fulfilment in David's Son and Lord, and in the glorious salvation which he has accomplished *for his people*. We know that Jesus is a King. As a King he was announced by Gabriel (Luke i. 32); as a King he was worshipped in his cradle by the Wise Men (Matt. ii. 11); as a King he was rejected by the Jews, persecuted by the chief priests, and crucified by Pilate (John xix. 19). And as a King he rose from the dead, was received up into glory, and now rules in power in heaven and upon earth (1 Tim. vi. 15). To this day and everywhere Jesus receives royal honours—his people say as with one voice and one heart, in the words of the ancient hymn, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ!" The burden of this psalm may be said to be, "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."

I. BECAUSE OF HIS FAVOUR WITH GOD. (Vers. 1—3.) Other kings have been honoured of God, but none like Jesus. From the cradle to the cross we find continual proof and token of the favour of God towards him (Luke ii. 52; ix. 35; John iii. 35; viii. 29). The secret was in the perfect accord between the Father and the Son, and the absolute and complete surrender of the Son to do his Father's will. What was said of the land of Israel, and still more tenderly of the house of the Lord, is true in the higher sense of God's dear Son, "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually" (Deut. xi. 12; 1 Kings ix. 3).

II. BECAUSE OF THE GREAT SALVATION WHICH HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED. (Vers. 1, 5.) 1. This salvation was very *dear* to him. It was "his heart's desire." 2. This

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* the Ammonites (2 Sam. xii. 31). He then sadly tarnished his golden crown.

salvation was obtained by a stupendous sacrifice. "Life" (ver. 4). We may take the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane as the true interpretation of this passage (Matt. xxvii. 38—44). There we see Jesus in an agony. There we see him "asking life," thrice, with strong crying and tears. And there we see him submitting, with the truest faith and love, to the holy will of God, which decreed that he should die that sinners might be saved (Matt. xxvii. 53, 54; John x. 17, 18; Heb. ii. 14, 15). 3. This salvation has secured *inestimable benefits to mankind*. (Ver. 6; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Eph. i. 7; ii. 4—6.)

III. BECAUSE OF THE SURE TRIUMPH OF HIS CAUSE AND KINGDOM. (Vers. 7—13.) 1. *Certain*. (Ver. 8.) Might here is right. God's word is *pledged*, and what he has promised he is able to perform. The King's strength is still in God, and through him all opposition shall be overthrown. 2. *Complete*. (Vers. 9—12.) The same power that is able to crush and confound the foe is arrayed in defence of God's people. The end is as the beginning—*praise*. It is like an anticipation of the song of Moses and the Lamb of the Apocalypse (Rev. xv. 3).—W F.

Ver. 4.—*Prayer*. What is true of Christ is true, in a sense, of his people. Here we learn—

1. THE TRUE NATURE OF PRAYER. It is the *desire of the heart* (ver. 2). This is frequently taught by doctrine and fact in Holy Scripture. Words are of the mouth, thoughts are of the heart. "Words without thoughts never to heaven go." *It is asking of God for things agreeable to his will*. While there is real "asking," there is also loving trust and acquiescence. God's will is aye the best will.

II. SOME LIGHT AS TO THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD ANSWERS PRAYER. 1. By giving what is good. "Life." 2. *In a higher sense than we thought of*. "For ever." 3. *In such a way as shall be for the greatest benefit to others as well as to ourselves*. "Blessings" (cf. Paul, "more needful for you," Phil. i. 24). Hence faith is confirmed. Our hopes as to the future are sustained. Our hearts are soothed amidst the disappointments and trials of life, by the assurance that all is well. We ask "life" for ourselves; and God gives what he sees best. We ask "life" for our friends. Some child or loved one is in peril of death. We plead for him. We entreat that he may be spared. We continue with "strong crying and tears" to pray that his life, so precious and so dear, may be prolonged. But in vain. He dies. We are troubled. We mourn in bitterness of soul, as if God had forgotten to be gracious. But when we look at things aright, we find comfort. God has answered us in his own way. He knows what is best. Your little one has gone quickly to heaven. Your darling boy has been taken to a nobler field of service than earth. The "desire of your eyes" has been caught up into the glory of God. There they await us. Love never faileth. The fellowship in Christ endures for ever.—W. F.

Vers. 1—13.—*Thanksgiving for prayer answered*. Close connection between this and the previous psalm—that a prayer for the king; this a thanksgiving that the prayer has been answered. The people speak to God (vers. 1—7); then (vers. 8—12) they speak to the king; then in ver. 13 they speak again to God. The occasion of the psalm has been disputed. Some think it is a birthday ode; some, a coronation hymn; and others, a thanksgiving for victory in battle. Let us take it first—

I. AS A BIRTHDAY ODE. "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." 1. *This notwithstanding his sin*. Which was thought in the Hebrew mind to forfeit length of days. His long life, therefore, was a special act of God's salvation (vers. 1, 4, 6). 2. *His long life had been made a prosperous one*. (Ver. 2.) His heart's desire had been granted him. How few can say this of a long life! How few feel that they have grasped the greatest good in life!

II. A CORONATION HYMN. (Vers. 3, 5.) "Thou forestallest, or surpiseest him with choicest blessings; thou settest a crown of gold upon his head." "Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him." 1. *This highest earthly honour was to represent God*. He was God's vicegerent to the nation. The Lord's anointed, who stood on earth for God in heaven; the image of the invisible King. This ought to be the idea still of all the highest earthly offices—king, statesman, teacher. 2. *But the grandest crown is that of supreme moral influence*. That is Christ's crown; he is King of men, not by physical

force, but by spiritual power. And this is our brightest crown when we can influence men supremely for their good.

III. THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORY IN BATTLE. (Vers. 8—12.) This may be the bearing of the whole strain of the psalm. Then from his previous victories it is prophesied in the eighth and following verses that he shall gain the victory in all future battles. 1. *Trust in God is the source of all our strength in our conflicts.* This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith—not a passive, but an active faith. 2. *Former victories show us that we can, if we will, conquer in all future conflicts.* By taking unto us “the whole armour of God.”—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXII.

THERE is no psalm which has raised so much controversy as this. Admitted to be Messianic by the early Hebrew commentators, it is by some understood wholly of David; by others, applied to the Israelite people, or to the pious part of it; by others again, regarded as an ideal representation of the sufferings of the righteous man, and the effects of them; and by one or two eccentric critics, explained as referring to Hezekiah or Jeremiah. Against the view that David means to describe in the psalm his own dangers, sufferings, and deliverance, it is reasonably urged that David was at no time in the circumstances here described—he was never without a helper (ver. 11); never “despised of the people” (ver. 6); never stripped of his clothes (ver. 17); never in the state of exhaustion, weakness, and emaciation that are spoken of (vers. 14—17); never pierced either in his hands or feet (ver. 16); never made a gazing-stock (ver. 17); never insulted by having his garments parted among his persecutors, or lots cast upon his vesture (ver. 18). The suppositions that the nation is meant, or the pious part of it, or an ideal righteous man, are negatived by the impossibility of applying to them the second portion of the psalm (vers. 22—31), and the consideration that abstractions of the kind suggested belong to the later and not the earlier phases of a nation’s poetry. The only explanation which remains is that traditional in the Christian Church, that David, full of the Holy Ghost, was moved to speak in the Person of Christ, and to describe, not his own sufferings and perils and deliverance, but those of his great Antitype, the Messiah, which were revealed to him in vision or

otherwise, and which he was directed to put on record. The close correspondence between the psalm and the incidents of the Passion is striking, and is admitted on all hands, even by Hupfeld, and it is a correspondence brought about by the enemies of the teaching of Christ, the Jews and the Romans. References indicative of the prophetic and Messianic character of the psalm are frequent in the New Testament. Note especially the following: Matt. xxvii. 35, 46; Mark xv. 34; John xix. 24; Heb. ii. 12.

The psalm is composed, manifestly, of two portions—the complaint and prayer of a sufferer (vers. 1—21), and a song of rejoicing after deliverance (vers. 22—31). According to some critics, the first of these two portions is also itself divided into two parts—each consisting of two strophes (vers. 1—10 and vers. 12—21), which are linked together by a single ejaculatory verse (ver. 11). A further analysis divides each of the three strophes of ten verses into two strophes of five; but there is certainly no such division in the second strophe of ten, since vers. 16 and 17 are most closely connected together.

The composition of the psalm by David, though not universally admitted, has in its favour a large majority of the critics. The imagery is Davidical; the sudden transition at ver. 22 is Davidical; the whole psalm “abounds in expressions which occur frequently, or exclusively, in psalms generally admitted to have been composed by David” (“Speaker’s Commentary”). David’s authorship is moreover distinctly asserted in the title, and confirmed by the “enigmatic superscription,” which is a Davidical fancy.

Ver. 1.—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Not a cry of despair, but a cry of loving faith, “My God, my God—Why hast thou for a time withdrawn thyself?” It is remarkable that our Lord’s quotation of this passage does not follow exactly either the Hebrew or the Chaldee paraphrase—the Hebrew having *‘azab-thani* for *sabacthani*, and the Chaldee paraphrase *metul ma* for *lama*. May we not conclude that it is the thought, and not its verbal expression by the sacred writers, that is inspired? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? It is very doubtful whether our translators have done right in supplying the words which they have added. The natural translation of the Hebrew would be, *Far from my salvation are the words of my roaring*. And this rendering yields a sufficiently good sense, viz. “Far from effecting my salvation (or deliverance) are the words of my roaring;” i.e. of my loud complaint. Our Lord’s “strong crying and tears” in the garden (Heb. v. 7) did not produce his deliverance.

Ver. 2.—O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; rather, *thou answerest not*; i.e. thou dost not interpose to deliver me. And in the night season, and am not silent (see Matt. xxvi. 36—44; Mark xiv. 34—39; Luke xxi. 41—44).

Ver. 3.—But thou art holy. Still God is holy; the Sufferer casts no reproach upon him, but “commits himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. ii. 23). O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. God is seen enthroned in his sanctuary, where the praises and prayers of Israel are ever being offered up to him. If he hears them, he will assuredly, in his own good time, hear the Sufferer.

Ver. 4.—Our fathers trusted in thee. It sustains the Sufferer to think how many before him have cried to God, and trusted in him, and for a while been seemingly not heard, and yet at length manifestly heard and saved. They trusted in thee, and thou didst (ultimately) deliver them.

Ver. 5.—They cried unto thee, and were delivered. If they were delivered because they cried, the Sufferer who cries “day and night” (ver. 2) can scarcely remain unheard for ever. They trusted in thee, and were not confounded; or, *were not put to shame* (*οὐ κατησχύνθησαν*, LXX.).

Ver. 6.—But I am a worm, and no man (comp. Job xxv. 6; Isa. xli. 14). The worm is a symbol of extreme weakness and helplessness—it is naturally despised, derided, trodden upon. A reproach of men, and despised of the people (comp. Isa. xlix. 7; liii. 3; and for the fulfilment, see Matt. xxvii. 39). How deeply Christ was

“despised of the people” appeared most evidently when they expressed their desire that, instead of him, a murderer should be granted to them (Acts iii. 14).

Ver. 7.—All they that see me laugh me to scorn; *ἐξευκρήρισάν με*, LXX. (comp. Luke xxiii. 35, “The people stood beholding; and the rulers also with them derided him (*ἐξευκρήρισον*)”). They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying (see Matt. xxvii. 39; Mark xv. 29: “They that passed by railed on him, *wagging their heads*,” where the expression of the Septuagint is again used).

Ver. 8.—He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him. This is a translation of the Septuagint Version rather than of the Hebrew text, which runs, *Trust in the Lord* (literally, *Roll [thy care] upon the Lord*): *let him deliver him*. Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. St. Matthew has put it on record that this text was actually cited by the scribes and elders who witnessed the Crucifixion, and applied to our Lord in scorn (Matt. xxvii. 43). They quoted apparently from the Septuagint, but with an inaccuracy common at the time, when books were scarce, and persons had to depend on their memory of what they had occasionally heard read.

Ver. 9.—But thou art he that took me out of the womb (comp. Job x. 8—11). God’s creatures have always a claim upon him from the very fact that they are his creatures. Every sufferer may appeal to God as his Maker, and therefore bound to be his Helper and Preserver. Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. Thou gavest me the serene joy and trust of infancy—that happy time to which man looks back with such deep satisfaction. Every joy, every satisfaction, came from thee.

Ver. 10.—I was cast upon thee from the womb. In a certain sense this is true of all; but of the Holy Child it was *most* true (Luke ii. 40, 49, 52). He was “cast” on God the Father’s care in an especial way. Thou art my God from my mother’s belly. The Child Jesus was brought near to God from his birth (Luke i. 35; ii. 21, 22). From the first dawn of consciousness God was his God (Luke ii. 40, 49).

Ver. 11.—Be not far from me. The considerations dwelt upon in vers. 3—5, and again in vers. 9, 10, have removed the sense of desertion expressed in ver. 1; and the Sufferer can now confidently call on God to help him. “Be not far from me,” he says, for trouble is near. The time is come when aid is most urgently required. For there is none to help; literally, *not a helper*. David himself had never been in such straits. He had

always had friends and followers. Under Saul's persecution he had a friend in Jonathan; he was supported by his father and his brethren (1 Sam. xxii. 1); in a short time he found himself at the head of four hundred (1 Sam. xxii. 2), and then of six hundred men (1 Sam. xxv. 13). In Absalom's rebellion there remained faithful to him the priestly tribe (2 Sam. xv. 24) and the Gibeonites (2 Sam. xv. 18), and others to the number of some thousands (2 Sam. xviii. 4). But he whom David prefigured, his Antitype, was deserted, was alone—"All the disciples forsook him and fled" (Matt. xxvi. 56)—he was truly one that "had no helper."

Ver. 12.—Many bulls have compassed me. The Sufferer represents the adversaries who crowd around him under the figure of "bulls"—ferocious animals in all parts of the world, and in Palestine particularly wild and ferocious. "Bulls and buffaloes are very numerous," says Canon Tristram, "in Southern Judæa; they are in the habit of gathering in a circle around any novel or unaccustomed object, and may be easily instigated into charging with their horns" ('Natural History of the Bible,' p. 71). Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. Bashan, the richest pasture-ground of Palestine, produced the largest and strongest animals (Ezek. xxxix. 18). Hence "the king of Bashan" became an expression for powerful oppressors (Amos iv. 1).

Ver. 13.—They gaped upon me with their mouths. One metaphor is superseded by another. Fierce and threatening as bulls, the adversaries are ravenous as lions. They "gape with their mouths," eager to devour, ready to spring on the prey and crush it in their monstrous jaws. As a ravening and a roaring lion. The tumult and noise made by those who demanded our Lord's death are noted by the evangelist, *περισσὰς ἑκραζον—ὁδρὺς ᾗσαν* (Matt. xxvii. 23, 24).

Ver. 14.—I am poured out like water (comp. Ps. lvi. 7; 2 Sam. xiv. 14). The exact meaning is uncertain; but extreme weakness and exhaustion, something like utter prostration, seems to be indicated. And all my bones are out of joint. The strain of the body suspended on the cross would all but dislocate the joints of the arms, and would be felt in every bone of the body. My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. The proximate cause of death in crucifixion is often failure of the heart's action, the supply of venous blood not being sufficient to stimulate it. Hence palpitation, faintness, and final syncope.

Ver. 15.—My strength is dried up like

a potsherd. All strength dies out under the action of the many acute pains which rack the whole frame, and as little remains as there remains of moisture in a potsherd. And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws. An extreme and agonizing thirst sets in—the secretions generally fail—and the saliva especially is suppressed, so that the mouth feels parched and dry. Hence the cry of suffering which was at last wrung from our Lord, when, just before the end, he exclaimed, "I thirst" (John xix. 28). And thou hast brought me into the dust of death. "The dust of death" is a periphrasis for death itself, which is so closely associated in our thoughts with the dust of the tomb (see below, ver. 29; and comp. Ps. xxx. 10; civ. 29; and Job x. 9; xxxiv. 35; Eccles. iii. 20; xii. 7, etc.).

Ver. 16.—For dogs have compassed me. "Dogs" now encompass the Sufferer, perhaps the subordinate agents in the cruelties—the rude Roman soldiery, who laid rough hands on the adorable Person (Matt. xxvii. 27—35). Oriental dogs are savage and of unclean habits, whence the term "dog" in the East has always been, and still is, a term of reproach. The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; or, a band of wicked ones have shut me in. The "band" of Roman soldiers (Mark xv. 16) seems foreshadowed. They pierced my hands and my feet. There are no sufficient critical grounds for relinquishing (with Hengstenberg) this interpretation. It has the support of the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Vulgate Versions, and is maintained by Ewald, Reiske, Böhl, Moll, Kay, the writer in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' and our Revisers. Whether the true reading be *kādu* (כָּדוּ) or *kādi* (כָּדִי), the sense will be the same, *kādi* being the apocopated participle of the verb, whereof *kādu* is the 3rd pers. plu. indic.

Ver. 17.—I may tell all my bones. Our Lord's active life and simple habits would give him a spare frame, while the strain of crucifixion would accentuate and bring into relief every point of his anatomy. He might thus, if so minded, "tell all his bones." They look and stare upon me (comp. Luke xxiii. 35, "And the people stood beholding").

Ver. 18.—They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. It has been well observed that "the act here described is not applicable either to David or to any personage whose history is recorded in the Bible, save to Jesus" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 221). Two evangelists (Matt. xxvii. 35; John xix. 24) note the fulfilment of the prophecy in the conduct of the soldiers at the crucifixion of Christ. The circumstance is reserved for the final

touch in the picture, since it marked that all was over; the Victim was on the point of expiring; he would never need his clothes again.

Ver. 19.—But he not thou far from me, O Lord (comp. ver. 11). The special trouble for which he had invoked God's aid having been minutely described, the Sufferer reverts to his prayer, which he first repeats, and then strengthens and enforces by requesting that the aid may be given speedily, O my strength, haste thee to help me. *Eyaluth*, the abstract term used for "strength," seems to mean "source, or substance, of all strength."

Ver. 20.—Deliver my soul from the sword. "The sword" symbolizes the authority of the Roman governor—that authority by which Christ was actually put to death. If he prayed, even on the cross, to be delivered from it, the prayer must have been offered with the reservations previously made in Gethsemane, "If it be possible" (Matt. xxvi. 39); "If thou be willing" (Luke xxii. 42); "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." The human will in Christ was in favour of the deliverance; the Divine will, the same in Christ as in his Father, was against it. My darling—literally, *my only one*—from the power of the dog. By "my darling" there is no doubt that the soul is intended, both here and in Ps. xxxv. 17. It seems to be so called as the most precious thing that each man possesses (see Matt. xvi. 26). "The dog" is used, not of an individual, but of the class, and is best explained, like the "dogs" in ver. 16, of the executioners.

Ver. 21.—Save me from the lion's mouth (comp. ver. 13). Either the chief persecutors, viewed as a class, or Satan, their instigator, would seem to be intended. For thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns; rather, *even from the horns of the wild oxen hast thou heard me*. The conviction suddenly comes to the Sufferer that he is heard. Still, the adversaries are round about him—the "dogs," the "lions," and the "strong bulls of Bashan," now showing as ferocious wild cattle, menacing him with their horns. But all the Sufferer's feelings are changed. The despondent mood has passed away. He is not forsaken. He has One to help. In one way or another he knows himself—feels himself—delivered; and he passes from despair and agony into a condition of perfect peace, and even exultation. He passes, in fact, from death to life, from humiliation to glory; and at once he proceeds to show forth his thankfulness by a burst of praise. The last strophe of the psalm (vers. 22—31) is the jubilant song of the Redeemer, now that his mediatorial work is done, and his life of suffering "finished" (John xix. 30).

Ver. 22.—I will declare thy Name unto my brethren. The thought of the brethren is uppermost. As, when the body was removed, loving messages were at once sent to the disciples (Matt. xxviii. 10; John xx. 17), so, with the soul of the Redeemer in the intermediate state, the "brethren" are the first care. God's Name, and all that he has done—the acceptance of the sacrifice, the effectuation of man's salvation—shall he made known to them (see Heb. ii. 9—12). In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. He will join with them in praising and adoring his Father, so soon as circumstances allow (compare the Eucharist at Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 30).

Ver. 23.—Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. "All Israel:" all the people of God are called upon to join in the praise which the Son will henceforth offer to the Father through eternity. The praise of God is to be joined with the fear of God, according to the universal teaching of Scripture.

Ver. 24.—For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. The Father might seem by his passivity to disregard his Son's affliction; but it was not really so. Every pang was marked, every suffering sympathized with. And the reward received from the Father was proportionate (see Isa. liii. 12, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death;" and Phil. ii. 8—11, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"). Neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. There was no real turning away, no real forsaking. Every cry was heard, and the cries were answered at the fitting moment.

Ver. 25.—My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation. The phraseology is that of the Mosaic dispensation, with which alone David was acquainted. But the fulfilment is in those services of praise where, whenever Christ's disciples are gathered together, there is he in the midst of them. I will pay my vows before them that fear him. "Vows," in the strict sense of the word, are scarcely meant; rather "devotions" generally.

Ver. 26.—The meek shall eat and be satisfied. In the Eucharistic feasts of Christ's



kingdom it is "the meek" especially who shall eat, and be satisfied, feeling that they have all their souls long for—a full banquet, of the very crumbs of which they are not worthy. They shall praise the Lord that seek him. The service shall be emphatically one of praise. Your heart shall live for ever. The result shall be life for evermore; for the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, worthily received, preserve men's bodies and souls to everlasting life.

Ver. 27.—All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord. The Gentiles from every quarter shall come into the new kingdom, remembering him whom they had so long forgotten, Jehovah, the true God. And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. Pleonastic. A repetition of the idea contained in the preceding clause. (For the fulfilment, the history of missions must be consulted.)

Ver. 28.—For the kingdom is the Lord's (comp. Ps. xvi. 10; xvii. 1). Christ has taken the kingdom, and even now rules on the earth—not yet wholly over willing subjects, but over a Church that is ever expanding more and more, and tending to become universal. And he is the Governor among the nations. Not the Governor of one nation only, but of all.

Ver. 29.—All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship. The Christian feast is not for the poor and needy only, like Jewish sacrificial feasts, but for the "fat ones" of the earth as well—the rich and prosperous. As Hengstenberg observes, "This great spiritual feast is not unworthy of the presence even of those who live in the greatest abundance; it contains a costly viand, which all their plenty cannot give—

a viand for which even the satisfied are hungry; and, on the other hand, the most needy and most miserable are not excluded" ('Commentary on the Psalms,' vol. i. p. 396). All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him; i.e. all mortal men whatsoever—all that are on their way to the tomb—shall bow before Christ, either willingly as his worshippers, or unwillingly as his conquered enemies, made to lick the dust at his feet. And none can keep alive his own soul. Life is Christ's gift; the soul cannot be kept alive except through him, by his quickening Spirit (John vi. 53, 63).

Ver. 30.—A seed shall serve him. The Church is founded on a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. So long as the world endures, Christ shall always have worshippers—a "seed" which will "serve" him. It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. If we accept this rendering, we must understand that the seed of the first set of worshippers shall be the Lord's people for one generation, the seed of the next for another, and so on. But it is suggested that the true meaning is, "This shall be told of the Lord to generation after generation" (so Hengstenberg, Kay, Alexander, and our Revisers).

Ver. 31.—They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this. One generation after another shall come, and shall report God's righteousness, as shown forth in Christ, each to its successor—a people yet to be born—telling them that God "has done this;" i.e. effected all that is here sketched out, and so accomplished the work of redemption.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 4.—*A pedigree of faith and piety.* "Our fathers trusted," etc. The Bible takes great account of pedigree. Yet not on those grounds in which men commonly glory—rank, title, wealth, fame; but in the line of faith and piety. These words contain—

I. A THANKFUL REMEMBRANCE. It is no small honour and blessing to spring from a godly stock. Those who have not this happiness in family lineage may yet claim it by adoption. A true Christian has all past generations of God's people as spiritual ancestors (Gal. iii. 29; Rom. iv. 16, 17).

II. A HOLY EXAMPLE, powerfully moving to faith, prayer, and holiness (Heb. vi. 12; xii. 1; 2 Tim. i. 3—5). *Noblesse oblige.*

III. A HUMBLE CLAIM ON GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. Because: 1. The trust and prayers of God's people in past generations were not for themselves only, but for their children (Gen. xvii. 18, 20). Ancestral prayers are a rich inheritance. 2. God's promises have regard to the children of his people (Ps. ciii. 17, 18; Acts ii. 39; iii. 25).

IV. AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH. The experience of those who have gone before us, the consenting testimony of so many generations, and so innumerable a multitude of believers, to the truth of the Bible, the power of prayer, the reality of God's grace, the fulfilment of his promises, is no small or feeble aid to our faith (Ps. xxxiv. 4—8; Heb. xi. 32—40).

CONCLUSION. 1. *We inherit the past.* The wise thoughts, immortal words, noble

deeds, holy lives, fervent prayers, toils, and sufferings of those who have gone before us, are a great treasure and trust, of which we shall have to give account. 2. *We are making the future.* What pattern, work, prayer, memory, that they will "not willingly let die," are we handing down to our successors?

Ver. 28.—*God's supreme dominion over all nations.* "The kingdom is the Lord's," etc. The second clause of this verse defines the meaning of the first. *God's supreme dominion*, in right and in fact, *is over all nations.* He reigns and he rules. There is a wide view of God's kingdom, as embracing the universe (Ps. ciii. 19; xciii. 1; xcvi. 1). There is also a spiritual view, in which the kingdom consists of individuals, ruled not by force, but by truth, love, and the Spirit of God (Luke xvii. 21; John xviii. 36). Nations have no place here. None the less, God's government of nations is a sublime fact and undoubted truth, holding a prominent place in Scripture. "All authority in heaven and earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18) must include this. The nations are promised as Christ's inheritance (Ps. ii. 8), and are to be blessed in him (Gal. iii. 8).

I. GOD GOVERNS THE NATIONS BY HIS ALL-CONTROLLING, WISE, JUST, AND MERCIFUL PROVIDENCE. This is one main lesson of the whole of Old Testament history—specially enforced in Jer. xviii. 7—10; i. 10; Gen. xv. 16, etc.; Deut. ix. 4. The ordered succession of empires, in Nebuchadnezzar's and Daniel's visions, emphatically enforces the same truth (Acts xvii. 26). The history of our own nation is a marvellous example, only second to that of Israel.

II. THE AUTHORITY OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT RESTS ON DIVINE AUTHORITY. (Rom. xiii. 1—6.) No human being can claim authority over another human being; no majority, any more than a single despot, over a minority or a single citizen, but by Divine ordinance. This is not merely revealed in Scripture, but imprinted and inwoven in human nature.

III. NATIONS, AS MUCH AS INDIVIDUALS, ARE BOUND BY GOD'S LAW. Human laws lack sanction when they contradict justice; they may be enforced, but cannot be revered. Government which outrages mercy, virtue, truth, purity, equity, denies the very end of its existence, and forfeits allegiance. On this ground of natural right, the American colonies revolted. "Natural right" is but another name for God's justice.

IV. NATIONAL LIFE AND CHARACTER, which are very far wider than government or state action, are within the province of Divine government; either conform to or disobey God's Law and revealed will. Private, family, social, morality; religion; trade and industry in every branch; amusement and society; education; literature; art,—are all favouring or hindering the formation of a "righteous nation" (Isa. xxvi. 2; Ps. cxliv. 15). (This touches the great question of state religion. Are the aims and means of the Church and of the state the same? It is possible to have an established Church, yet an irreligious nation; or many Churches, all free, yet a religious nation.)

V. THESE WORDS ARE PROPHETIC OF WHAT SHALL YET BE. (Ps. lxxii. 8, 11, 17; Rev. xi. 15.) Christ holds the sceptre of providence as well as of grace (Eph. i. 22); and "he must reign" (1 Cor. xv. 25).

CONCLUSION. *Practical lessons.* 1. The character of a nation depends on the character of its individual citizens. A truly Christian nation would be one the bulk of whose citizens are personally real Christians. Its laws, institutions, and policy would then be moulded by principles learned from God's Word. 2. Public duty, political, municipal, etc., far from being inconsistent with the Christian calling (as some teach), is, when rightly performed, *religious*—part of the service we owe to God.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—31.—*From darkness to light; or, the song of the early dawn.* This is one of the most wonderful of all the psalms. It has gathered round it the study of expositors of most diverse types—from those who see in it scarcely aught but a description beforehand of the Messiah's suffering and glory, to those who see in it scarcely any Messianic reference at all, and who acknowledge only one sense in which even the term "Messianic" is to be tolerated, even in the fact that light gleams forth after the darkness. Both these extreme views should be avoided, and we venture to

ask for the careful and candid attention of the reader, as we move along a specific path in the elucidation of this psalm. The title of the psalm is significant; literally, it reads, "To the chief musician [or, 'precentor'] upon Aijeleth Shahar [or, 'the hind of the morning,' margin]. A Psalm of David." We accept the heading, here and elsewhere, "a Psalm of David," unless adequate reason to the contrary can be shown. But what can be the meaning of the expression, "the hind of the morning"? A reference to First's Lexicon will be found helpful.<sup>1</sup> The phrase is a figurative one, and signifies, "the first light of the morning." In this psalm we see the light of early morn breaking forth after the deepest darkness of the blackest night. Hence the title given above to this homily. But then the question comes—Whose is the darkness, and whose is the light? We reply—Primarily, the writer's, whoever he may have been, whether David or any other Old Testament saint. For the psalm is not written in the third person, as is the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. There is no room here for the question, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" In Isa. liii. the reference is to another; in this psalm the wail is declared to be the writer's own. Yet we have to take note of the fact that in the New Testament there are some seven or eight references to this psalm in which its words and phrases are applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. There are other phrases in the psalm which were literally true of our Lord, but yet are not quoted in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> We do not wonder at Bishop Perowne's remark,<sup>3</sup> "Unnatural as I cannot help thinking that interpretation is which assumes that the psalmist himself never felt the sorrows which he describes . . . I hold that to be a far worse error which sees here no foreshadowing of Christ at all. Indeed, the coincidence between the sufferings of the psalmist and the sufferings of Christ is so remarkable, that it is very surprising that any one should deny or question the relation between the type and the antitype." To a like effect are the devout and thoughtful words of Orelli,<sup>4</sup> "What the psalmist complains of in mere figurative, though highly coloured terms, befall the Son of God in veritable fact. Herein we see the objective connection, established of set purpose by God's providence, which so framed even the phrasing of the pious prayer, that *without knowledge of the suppliant* it became prophecy, and again so controlled even what was outward and seemingly accidental in the history of Jesus, that the old prophetic oracles appear incorporated in it." There is no reason to think, on the one hand, that the writer was a mere machine, nor yet, on the other, that he fully knew the far-reaching significance of the words he used.<sup>5</sup> And this leads us to a remark which we make once for all, that there are two senses in which psalms may be Messianic—direct and indirect. 1. *Direct*. In these the reference is exclusively to the Messiah; every phrase is true of him, and of him alone, and cannot be so translated as not to apply to him, nor so that it can, as a whole, apply to any one else. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and also the second and hundred and tenth psalms are illustrations of this. 2. *Indirect*. In these the first meaning is historical, and applies to the writer himself; but many phrases therein have a second and far-reaching intent; of these the fullest application is to him who was David's Son and yet David's Lord. The psalm before us is an illustration of this indirect Messianic structure; and this not only, perhaps not so much, because in the first writing of the words the Spirit of God pointed forward to Christ, as because our Lord himself, having taken a human nature, and shared human experiences, found himself the partaker of like sorrows with the Old Testament saints, plunged into like

<sup>1</sup> Pages 74, a, and 1370, b.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ver. 1 with Matt. xxvii. 46; vers. 7, 8 with Luke xxiii. 35 and Matt. xxvii. 89, 43; ver. 15 with John xix. 18; ver. 18 with John xix. 23, 24 and Luke xxiii. 34; vers. 22, 25 with Heb. ii. 11, 12. See the admirable appendix to the 'Variorum Bible' (1880), pp. 20, 21, and (1893), pp. 26, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Perowne on the Psalms, 6th edit., p. 254.

<sup>4</sup> 'Old Testament Prophecy,' English edit. (T. and T. Olark), p. 175. "Late in the Middle Ages, Jewish Massōra scholars approved an unsuitable reading in the Psalter (Ps. xxii. 17, Hebrew), in order thus to take away from Christians the ground of a favourite Messianic interpretation" (Ewald, 'Revelation, its Nature and its Record,' p. 386, Clark).

<sup>5</sup> See 1 Pet. i. 10—12; the introductory chapter to the present writer's work, 'To the Light through the Cross' (Dickinson); also Maclaren, Kirkpatrick, Fausset, and Forbes *hereon*.

horrible darkness, which found expression in the very same words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"<sup>1</sup> Mr. Spurgeon, indeed, admits some possible application to David himself, but says that believers will scarcely care to think of his sufferings; they will rather fasten their gaze on those of their Lord. That is true, in a very touching sense. At the same time, we shall lose much of the comfort the psalm is adapted to afford, if we do not look very distinctly at the sufferings of David, in order to see, with equal distinctness, how completely our Lord shared his "brethren's" sorrows, darkness, and groans, when he took up their burdens and made them his own.<sup>2</sup> Let us therefore deal with this psalm in a twofold outline—first, as it applies to the writer; and then as it is taken up by the Lord Jesus, and made his own (with such exceptions as that named in the first footnote below).

I. ISRAEL'S KING PASSES THROUGH DEEPEST DARKNESS TO THE LIGHT. Here let us answer by anticipation a remark with which we have frequently met, to the effect that we cannot fasten on any incident in the career of David which would lead to such extreme anguish as that indicated here. Who that has any knowledge of the horrors to which sensitive souls are liable, could raise any difficulty over this? Far more depends on subjective condition than on outward incident. Why, the saints of God now do pass through times of indescribable anguish, of which no outward incident affords even a glimmer of explanation. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." Let the outer occasion have been whatsoever it may, here at any rate is: 1. *A saint in terrible darkness.* In the midst of his woe, he remembers his transgressions,<sup>3</sup> and it may have been, as is so often the case, that the writer attributes his anguish to his numberless transgressions (ver. 1, LXX.). The details of his intensity of sorrow are manifold. (1) Prayer rises from his heart day and night without relief (ver. 2). (2) He is despised (vers. 6—8). His enemies laugh and mock. (3) His foes, wild, fierce, ravenous, plot his ruin (vers. 12, 13). (4) His strength is spent with sorrow (ver. 15). (5) There are eager anticipations of his speedily being removed out of the way (ver. 18). (6) And, worst of all, it seems as if God, his own God, whom he had trusted from childhood (vers. 9, 10), had now forsaken him, and given him up to his foes. How many suffering saints may find solace in this psalm, as they see how God's people have suffered before them? Surely few could have a heavier weight of woe than the writer of this plaintive wail. 2. *The woe is freely told to God.* There may be the stinging memory of bygone sin piercing the soul, still the psalmist cleaves to his God. (1) The heart still craves for God; even in the dark; yea, the more because of the darkness. (2) Hence the abandonment is not actual. However dense the gloom may be, when

<sup>1</sup> It would be by no means wise or safe to say that every phrase, even in the first verse, would apply to our Saviour. The last clause is thus given in the LXX.: *Μακρὰν ἀπὸ τῆς σωτηρίας μου οἱ λόγοι τῶν παραπτωμάτων μου*: Vulgate, *Longè a salute mea verba delictorum meorum*, "Far from my deliverance are the words of my transgressions." Thus we find that, according to the translation given in the Septuagint, and accepted by the translators into the Vulgate, the psalmist regards his own transgressions as a part of the weight of anguish which presses upon him, and, indeed, as accounting for it. No such confession could possibly suit our Lord; nor can his anguish in using this first verse, even in part, be accounted for, save as he had made the burden of the world his own. But when we hear his cry of agony, and remember that the quotations in the New Testament from the Old Testament are generally from the LXX. rather than from the Hebrew, how startlingly touching and striking are the words, "Who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin!"<sup>1</sup> as if the sacred writer, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, would remind us that our great High Priest, having been in all things made like unto his brethren, could make their most agonizing cries his own, *save the acknowledgment of sin!* The psalm will thus become more and more precious to us as we avoid the theory of an exclusively Messianic meaning on the one hand, and Cheyne's heartless criticism on the other.

<sup>2</sup> On this psalm, Perowne, Orelli, and Calvin may be read with great advantage and profit. It is very painful to read Cheyne on this psalm; we cannot understand his references to Orelli, nor can we verify his statements as to Calvin's opinions. A striking exposure of some of Cheyne's inaccuracies will be found in an able article by Mr. Waller, in the *Theological Monthly*, April, 1889.

<sup>3</sup> See first footnote above, and LXX. We venture to call in question the statement that the LXX. are clearly wrong.

the soul can cry, "*My God*," we may be sure the cry is not unreciprocated. (3) Such a cry will surely be heard. Past deliverances assure us of this. Yea, even ere the wail in the dark is over, the light begins to dawn. "One Sunday morning," said Mr. Spurgeon, in an address at Mildmay Hall, June 26, 1890, reported in the *Christian* of July 4, "I preached from the text, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' I could not tell why I should be made to preach it. I felt while preaching as if I were myself forsaken. On the sabbath evening, there came into the vestry a man of about sixty, whose eyes were bright with a strange lustre. He took my hand, and held it, and cried. He said to me, 'Nobody ever preached my experience before. I have now been for years left, deserted, in a horrible gloom of great darkness; but this morning I learned that I was not the only man in the darkness, and I believe I shall get out!' I said, 'Yes; I have got out; but now I know why I was put in.' That man was brought back from the depths of despair, and restored to joy and peace. There was a child of God, dying in darkness. He said to the minister who spoke with him, 'Oh, sir, though I have trusted Christ for years, I have lost him now. What can become of a man who dies feeling that God has deserted him?' The minister replied, 'What did become of that Man who died saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Is he not on the highest throne of glory even now?' The man's mind changed in a moment, and he began to say, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;' and he died in peace." 3. *The light dawns at last.* The "everlasting covenant" does not fail; it has been "ordered in all things," and remains sure and steadfast; and oftentimes, even while the saint is on his knees, he will scarce have ended his groaning ere his sigh is turned to a song (cf. Ps. xxvii. 12—14). Hence the last ten verses of the psalm are as joyous as the others are sad. "The darkest hour is before the dawn," and the brightness of morning shall chase away the gloom of night. So it is here. (1) The saint who takes his groans to God alone, shall yet sing his praises in the assemblies of the saints. Having told the rest to his God, he will "give others the sunshine." (2) The rehearsal of this story shall be the joy of other hearts in day to come (vers. 25—27). (3) The outcome of all will be that God will vindicate his own honour, and that the generation yet unborn will praise him and declare his righteousness.

II. WORDS OF A SUFFERING SAINT ARE APPROPRIATED BY A SUFFERING SAVIOUR. The Lord Jesus Christ, in all things "made like unto his brethren," takes up words from this psalm into his own lips. If we were dealing *only* with the Messianic aspect of the psalm, we should open it up in the following order: (1) The Saviour's suffering. (2) The Saviour's inquiry: "Why?" (3) The Saviour's joy. Since, however, we are seeking to expound the psalm in *both* its aspects, we rather indicate four lines of thought, the pursuing of which will throw light on the wonder of the appropriation of the words of a suffering saint by a suffering Saviour; while some look at the fierce cry with which this psalm begins as intended to set forth the woes of the coming Messiah, that cry seems to us far more touching when we find that our dear Redeemer uses the words of an ancient sufferer as his own!<sup>1</sup> Observe: 1. *There is no depth of sorrow through which the saint can pass, but Jesus understands it all.* How many causes of woe are enumerated here! But in all points Jesus felt the same. The writer endured (1) the cutting remarks of many; (2) weakness; (3) reproach and scorn; (4) the plotting of foes; (5) the treachery of friends; and, worst of all, (6) the sense of separation from God. Every one of these forms of hardship and ill pressed sorely on Jesus; and though we may meditate continuously and with ever-deepening wonder<sup>2</sup> on each of them, yet all the rest fade away into insignificance compared with the anguish that arose from the hiding of the Father's face. Every trouble can be borne when the Father is seen to smile; but when his face is hidden in a total eclipse, what darkness can be so dreadful as that? There was, as it were, a hiding of the face from him (Isa. liii. 3).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "By the deepest of all sympathies, the sufferings of Messiah became the sufferings of the Church, and she cries out, with her suffering Lord, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"

<sup>2</sup> For a series of devout reflections on the whole psalm, the remarks of Mr. Spurgeon thereon will be found helpful.

<sup>3</sup> See the present writer's exposition of Isa. liii., in 'To the Light through the Cross' (Dickinson).

Let those saints of God who have to pass through seasons of prolonged mental anguish remember that, however severe the conflict may be, the Saviour has passed through one still more terrible than theirs. 2. *If even the saint asks "why?" even so did the Saviour.* The "why?" however, applies only to the opening words—to the hiding of God's face. There may be mystery therein, even when (as in the case of every saint) there are transgressions to be bemoaned. But our Saviour has an unfathomable woe, "*yet without sin.*" The "why?" then, imperatively requires an answer. In the fire, at the faggot, and at the stake, martyrs have sung for joy. Why is it that at the moment of direst need the sinless Sufferer should have felt aught so dreadful as abandonment by God? Not that the abandonment was real. The Father never loved the Son more than when he hung bleeding on the cross. But our Saviour *endured the sense of it.* Why was this? He did not deserve it. But he had laden himself with our burden. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." Nor do we know that we can put the pith and essence of the atonement in fewer words than these: (1) sin separates from God; (2) Jesus bore our sin; therefore (3) Jesus endured the sense of separation. We can understand that, coming as Man into the midst of a sinful race, all the suffering which a holy nature must endure in conflict with sinful men would be his. But the sense of desertion by God while doing his Father's will can only be accounted for by the amazing fact that "he sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." 3. *In passing through his manifold experience of sorrow, the Saviour learned to suffer with the saint, and was being made perfect as the Captain of salvation.* (Heb. ii. 10; v. 2, 7, 8, 9.) Our Saviour was (1) to lead many sons unto glory; (2) to be One who could sympathize, soothe, and succour in every case of woe (Heb. ii. 18); (3) to be One who by his sympathetic power could inspire his hosts; and (4) to teach them that, as they were destined to follow him in his heavenly glory, they must not be surprised if they have first to follow him in the pathway of woe. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord." Objection: "But how can the sympathy of Jesus with me be perfect? He was without sin, and I am not. So the parallel fails." Good people who urge this objection forget that it is the presence of sin in each of us which makes our sympathy with each other so imperfect. Because Jesus was without sin, he can draw the line exactly between defects that are due to infirmity and such as are traceable to sin. The second he forgives; the first he pities. *Is not this the very perfection of sympathy?*

III. THE WORDS OF THE SAINT EMERGING FROM HIS GLOOM ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE SAVIOUR IN HIS EXALTATION AND TRIUMPH. With the Saviour, as with the psalmist, the darkest night was the prelude to the brightness of day. The brightness which marks the last ten verses of the psalm is a declaration that the kingdom of David shall be established for ever and ever, and that, though David may have to pass through fire and flood, his kingdom shall abide through age after age; and thus we find the phraseology of these verses applied to the after-career of David's Son and David's Lord in Heb. ii. 11, 12. Whence five points invite attention. The Holy Ghost, inditing the psalmist's words so that they forecast the issue of Messiah's sufferings as well as his own, shows us our Saviour (1) emerging from the conflict; (2) joining with his people in songs of rejoicing; (3) declaring the Father's Name to his "brethren;" (4) gathering home the severed tribes of mankind; (5) bringing in the victorious kingdom (vers. 21—31). It is not, it is not for nought that the Messiah endured all his woe (Isa. liii. 11; Heb. xii. 1, 2; Phil. ii. 11). It behoved him to suffer, and then "to enter into his glory." And as with the Master, so with the servant. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." He hath said, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." Following him in sharing his cross, we shall follow him in sharing his crown.—C.

Vers. 1—31.—*A struggle from the gloom of adversity to peace and joy.* It was said among the heathen that a just man struggling with adversity was a sight worthy of the gods. Such a sight we have here. We see a truly just man struggling from the gloomiest depths of adversity upwards to the serene heights of peace and joy in God. Three stages may be marked.

I. THE WAIL OF DESERTION. (Vers. 1—10.) Suffering is no "strange thing." It comes sooner or later to all. Always, and especially in its severer forms, it is a mystery

We cry, "Why?" "Why am I thus?" "Why all this from God to me?" God's servants who have been most afflicted have most felt this mystery. So it was with Abraham, when "the horror of great darkness fell upon him" (Gen. xv. 12). So it was with Jacob, in that night of long and awful wrestling with the angel (Gen. xxxii. 24). So it was with Moses and the prophets (Isa. xl. 27). So it was with the psalmist here. His sufferings were intensified by the sense of desertion (vers. 1, 2). He cried to God, but there was no answer. He continued day and night in prayer, and yet there was no response. And yet he will not give up his trust in God. He tries to calm himself by remembrance of God's holiness and love, and by the thought of God's gracious dealings with his people. But, alas! this only aggravated his pain. The contrast was sharp and terrible. "*Our* fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them. But *I* am a worm, and no man." It seemed to him that the desertion, which he felt so keenly, was equally apparent to others. But instead of pity, there was scorn; instead of sympathy, there was reproach. Lowered in the estimation of others, he was lowered also in his own. All this seemed irreconcilable with a right relation to God. He cannot understand, but no more can he reproach. The bond of love is strained, but it is not ruptured. Like Job, he is ready to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." How thankful should we be for such revelations! They not only teach us patience, but they help us in the time of our trial to draw nearer in loving concord with Jesus and his saints.

II. THE PRAYER OF TRUST. There is a time to speak. Speech helps to unburden the heart. But the psalmist does not cry for help till he has reached a calmer mood, and so far encouraged himself by recollection of God's love and kindness in his life from the first (vers. 9, 10). He looks to the past, that he may be braced to look at the present. Then, in sight of all the distresses and perils that surrounded him, he cries mightily to God (vers. 11—18). His faith is sorely tried, but it does not fail. Even with things waxing worse and worse, with enemies many and fierce, with strength well-nigh worn out, with death staring him in the face (ver. 18), he renews his pathetic cry, "Be not far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me" (vers. 19—21).

III. THE SONG OF VICTORY. The capacity of the soul is wonderful. It can sink very low, and it can rise very high. It has been said of prayer—

"What changes one short hour  
Spent in thy presence has availed to make!"

And we see this here. Fear is turned to praise (vers. 22—24). Loneliness gives place to the joys of "the great congregation" (vers. 25, 26). Individual sufferings are forgotten in the glad vision of the triumphs of Messiah, and the glory and blessedness of his kingdom (vera. 27—31). Who is there who loves the Lord, whose heart does not rejoice in foretaste and foresight of these good times, and with renewed ardour pray, "Thy kingdom come"?—W. F.

Vers. 1—10.—*The cry of despair struggling with the cry of faith.* The writer was apparently an exile, still in the hands of his heathen captors. His extreme peril, the obloquy and scorn to which he was exposed as a professed worshipper of Jehovah, his imminent death, are touched on with a tenderness and a power which have made the language familiar to us in another application—as used by Christ in the agonies of the cross. It is the *cry of despair struggling with the cry of faith.*

I. THE CRY OF DESPAIR. That God had forsaken him. 1. *Had forsaken him for a long time.* (Vers. 1, 2.) It was not a temporary eclipse, but seemed a permanent desertion. 2. *That this abandonment was somehow consistent with God's faithfulness.* (Ver. 3.) There was no doubt it did not arise from caprice, but from holiness. That made the darkness very dark. 3. *It arose from his personal unworthiness.* (Vers. 4—6.) God had rescued his fathers; but he was a worm, and not a man, unworthy of deliverance, despised of men. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." 4. *A contrast to God's former care of him.* (Vers. 9, 10.) Not easy to analyze the contents of such a consciousness. But in general, "It is the sense of the Divine mercy, care, and support gone!"

II. But there is in the background, FAITH STRUGGLING AGAINST THIS DESPAIR.

1. *He still can say, "My God."* Repeatedly (vers. 1, 2). No unbelief could dissolve that tie. 2. *Faith will not let go its hold upon his "holiness," however dark its aspect towards him now.* (Ver. 3.) God cannot be far from a man who retains the sense of his holy faithfulness. 3. *He is suffering in the righteous cause—for God's sake.* (Vers. 6—8.) As Christ was. There is more than a gleam of hope for him here. 4. *God had brought him into the world, and cared for him in helpless infancy.* (Vers. 9, 10.) These are the grounds of persistent faith battling against the sense of desertion and despair; and they are all-sufficient for us in our darkest hours. "We can but trust; we cannot know."—S.

Vers. 11—21.—*Prayer in suffering.* The persecuted exile continues to speak of his sufferings, but seems to rise up out of the despair of the first verse into the faith implied in prayer. Much of the suffering here described, if not productive, was at least *typical*, of the suffering of Christ. An argument is still going on in the sufferer's mind as to whether God had *finally forsaken him or not*. He has been trying in the first ten verses to argue down the feeling, but has not yet succeeded; and now he breaks out into prayer, driven by the urgency of the crisis into which he has come.

I. THE ARGUMENT OF THE PRAYER. The general argument is stated in the eleventh verse. Trouble was near, and there was none to help; it had come to the last extremity with him, and not to help now would be completely and finally to forsake. The particulars of the argument are: 1. *The strength and fury of his persecutors.* (Vers. 12, 13, 16.) They are compared to bulls and lions, the most formidable beasts a man can encounter. Further on his enemies are compared to wild dogs, that have enclosed and surrounded him. So that there is no escape except by the hand of God. 2. *He has lost all strength of body and courage of heart.* (Vers. 14—17.) He sees no human means of escaping death. Severe trials from man and the Divine desertion (ver. 15) have "laid him in the dust of death." 3. *The last act of indignity, previous to his death, has been accomplished.* (Ver. 18.) They strip him, and cast lots for his garments. So that this is a cry for deliverance, uttered in the very jaws of death itself. Of course, the psalm was written after the experiences it describes.

II. THE PRAYER ITSELF. It was begun at the eleventh verse, and now again breaks forth with full power (vers. 19—21). 1. *He cries to the Infinite Strength to make haste to help him.* This looks back to the second verse, where he complains, "Thou answerest me not;" and, if help is to come, it must come at once, for he is in the very article of death. 2. *He is alone and unfriended among ruthless enemies.* "My darling," equivalent to "my lovely person" (ver. 20). Utterly and solely dependent on God, as we shall be in dying. 3. *The cry ends with an expression of assured confidence.* (Ver. 21, "Thou hast answered me.") "Thou hast heard me." At last he sees deliverance at hand, and knows that his prayer has been heard, and he has been delivered from death.—S.

Vers. 22—31.—*Consequences of deliverance.* In this last part the sufferer depicts the happy consequences of his deliverance, which he anticipates in faith, and, lifted up in spirit above the present, beholds, as if it were already present.

I. THE PSALMIST'S DELIVERANCE SHALL BE A CAUSE OF REJOICING TO ALL ISRAEL. (Vers. 22—26.) 1. *He will inspire the whole congregation with the tidings.* We cannot and ought not to keep to ourselves the great fact of our salvation. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee," etc. 2. *The good tidings were that God had answered the cry of one who was in the very jaws of death.* (Ver. 24.) And if he had heard one, the unavoidable conclusion was that he would hear all who cried to him. The psalmist's experience showed that God's mercy was universal; that was the *suppressed premiss* of this argument.

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S REDEEMING GRACE SHALL EXTEND TO HEATHEN NATIONS. (Vers. 27, 28.) This is to be rejoiced in. 1. *Because the heathen have greater need of it than the Church.* The Church (Israel) have already some knowledge of it; but the heathen are sunk in deeper sins and sorrows, and have no knowledge of God's redeeming grace. 2. *It is God's will that the heathen should know and receive his grace.* He saves one man or one nation, in order that they should make his work



known to other men and other nations. He is to be made known as "the Governor among the nations."

III. ALL CLASSES, WHETHER HAPPY OR MISERABLE, SHALL WELCOME THIS KNOWLEDGE. (Ver. 29.) 1. *The great spiritual feast will be enjoyed by those who live in outward abundance.* Because here is food for which even the satisfied are still hungry, which their plenty cannot supply. All guests are poor here, and God is rich for all. 2. *It is a fountain of life to those ready to sink in death.* They shall bow before and worship him.

IV. THE PRESENT AGE SENDS FORWARD THE GLAD TIDINGS TO POSTERITY. (Vers. 30, 31.) See how God's work, beginning with a single individual, propagates itself by its effects upon the mind, spreading, first among those nearest to him; then, through them, to those remote, among the rich and poor, the living and the dying; and on through the ages with ever-increasing power and influence.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXIII.

THIS little psalm is an idyll of great beauty, describing the peace and calm delight which dwell with one whose trust is wholly in God. David's authorship, asserted in the title, is highly probable; but we cannot fix the poem to any special period in his lifetime; we can only say that he is beyond the days of boyhood, having already enemies (ver. 5), and that he has known what it is to be in danger of death (ver. 4). But, when he writes, he is experiencing a time of rest and refreshment (vers. 1—3), nay, of prosperity and abundance (ver. 5). His thoughts are happy thoughts—he lacks nothing; he has no fear; God's mercy and goodness are with him; and he feels assured that they will continue with him all the days of his life (ver. 6); he has but one desire for the future, viz. to dwell in the house of God—*i.e.* in the presence of God—for ever.

Ver. 1.—The Lord is my Shepherd. This metaphor, so frequent in the later Scriptures (Isa. xl. 11; xlix. 9, 10; Jer. xxxi. 10; Ezek. xxxiv. 6—19; John x. 11—19, 26—28; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 25; v. 4; Rev. vii. 17), is perhaps implied in Gen. xlviii. 15, but first appears, plainly and openly, in the Davidical psalms (see, besides the present passage, Psa. lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 20; lxxviii. 53; lxxix. 14; lxxx. 1—psalms which, if not David's, belong to the time, and were written under the influence, of David). It is a metaphor specially consecrated to us by our Lord's employment and endorsement of it (John x. 11—16). I shall not want. The Prayer-book Version brings out the full sense, "Therefore can I lack nothing" (comp. Dent. ii. 7; viii. 9; and Matt. vi. 31—33).

Ver. 2.—He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; literally, *in grassy homesteads*—"the richer, oasis-like spots, where a homestead would be fixed in a barren tract of land" (Kay). He leadeth me beside the still waters; rather, *waters of refreshment*; ἐν ὕδατος ἀναψύξεως (LXX.).

Ver. 3.—He restoreth my soul; *i.e.* revives it and reinvigorates it when it is exhausted and weary (see the comment on Ps. xix. 7, where the same verb occurs). He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness. Which are also "paths of pleasantness and peace" (Prov. iii. 17). For his Name's sake. To magnify his Name as a gracious and merciful God.

Ver. 4.—Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. A sudden transition and contrast, such as David loved. The quiet paths of righteousness and peace remind the poet of the exact opposite—the dark and dismal way through the valley of the shadow of death. Even when so situated, he does not, he will not, fear. I will fear no evil, he says. And why? For thou art with me. The same Protector, the same gracious and merciful God, will be still with him—leading him, guiding his steps, shepherding him, keeping him from evil. Thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff—*i.e.* thy shepherd's crook, and thy staff of defence—they comfort me. They make me feel that, however long and however dreary the way through the dark vale, I shall still have thy guidance and thy protection.

Ver. 5.—Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Another transition. The danger of death is past. David reverts to the thought of the tranquil, happy, joyous time which God has vouchsafed to grant him. He has "adversaries," indeed, but they are powerless to effect anything against him. They have to look on with ill-concealed annoyance at his prosperity, to see his table amply spread; his condition such as men generally

envy; his wealth typified by abundant oil—*thou anointest* (or, *makest fat*, marginal rendering) my head with oil—great, his whole life full to overflowing with blessedness. *My cup runneth over*, he declares—is not only full to the brim, but runs over the brim—an expressive metaphor, indicative of a state of bliss rarely experienced in this life.

Ver. 6.—Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. The past is an earnest of the future. As God's "goodness and mercy" have always followed him hitherto, David has no doubt

that they will continue to cling to him while his life continues. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever (comp. Ps. xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple"). Such passages are, of course, not to be understood literally; they express the longing of the soul for a sense of the continual presence of God, and a realization of constant communion with him.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Human experience and Divine inspiration.* "The Lord is my Shepherd." The few verses which compose this psalm would leave but a small blank on the page, if blotted out; but suppose all translations which have been made of them into all languages, all references to them in literature, all remembrance of them in human hearts, could be effaced, who can measure the blank, the void, the loss? To have written this short psalm is one of the highest honours ever put upon man. What libraries have these few lines survived? Yet they are as fresh as if written yesterday. They make themselves at home in every language. They touch, inspire, comfort us, not as an echo from three thousand years ago, but as the voice of a living friend. The child repeats them at his mother's knee; the scholar expends on them his choicest learning; the plain Christian loves them for their simplicity as much as for their beauty; the Church lifts them to heaven in the many-voiced chorus; they fall like music on the sick man's ear and heart; the dying Christian says, "That is *my* psalm," and cheers himself with its words of faith and courage as he enters the dark valley. Mere poetic beauty could not confer or explain this marvellous power. The secret of it is twofold. These words are the language (1) of *human experience*, and (2) of *Divine inspiration*.

I. HUMAN EXPERIENCE. This is the utterance of weakness and of trust. In the Bible, as in the Person of our Saviour, the human and the Divine are found, not apart, but in closest union. God spake not merely by the lips or pens of the prophets, but by the men themselves (2 Pet. i. 21). Were an angel to say, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd," this would bring no assurance to a frail, sinful human heart. A voice from heaven might declare, "The Lord is a Shepherd," or as promise, "The Lord is your Shepherd;" but only the voice of a brother man, weak and needy as ourselves, can speak this word, the key-note of the whole psalm, "*my* Shepherd." God could have given us a Bible written, like the tables of the Law, "with the finger of God;" but he has spoken through the minds and hearts and personal experience of men of like passions with ourselves, making their faith, penitence, sorrow, joy, prayer, thanksgiving, the mirror and pattern of our own. This is the voice of *personal* experience. David is better known to us than any Bible hero except St. Paul. This psalm leads back our thoughts to his youth; but it is no youthful composition—it bears the stamp of deep experience. The young shepherd might have sung of the famous past, or of the glorious future; but the veteran king, looking back to his youth, sees in it a meaning he could not have seen then, and a light shining all along his path.

II. INSPIRED WORDS. Sweet and deep as are these echoes from the depth of the past, they would never have reached us had they been no more than the words of a man, though a hero, a poet, a king; they are the voice of God's Spirit in him. Hence, with that *continuity* which is one principal note of the inspiration of Scripture, we find this image taken up again and again, especially in five passages of signal importance—two in the Old Testament, three in the New. 1. In Ezek. xxxiv. God is seen as the Shepherd of his people—the nation and Church of Israel. Hence the similitude passes on to the New Testament. Christ is the chief Shepherd, who employs under-shepherds

to feed his flock (John xxi. 15-17; 1 Pet. v. 2-4). 2. In Isa. xl. 11 (as in the psalm) Christ's tender care of individuals, even the youngest, is represented. 3 and 4. In Luke xv. 3-7 and John x. 1-16 our Saviour appropriates this similitude to himself, as seeking and saving the lost, ruling and feeding each one who follows him, laying down his life for the flock, gathering "other sheep" into "one flock." 5. In Rev. vii. 16, 17 we see the Divine Shepherd gathering his whole flock in the safety, rest, and joy of heaven.

CONCLUSION. Can you say, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd"? If not, the gospel has not yet fulfilled its mission in your heart and life. Observe, the warrant is not in yourself, but in your Saviour; not, "I am one of Christ's flock," but, "He is my Shepherd." If you *can* say this, then you may fearlessly cast all your care on him, and finish the verse, "I shall not want" (1 Pet. v. 7; Matt. vi. 25, 26).

Vers. 1-4.—"*The Shepherd of Israel.*" To a countryman of David, an ancient Israelite, the shepherd with his flock was no poetical figure, but a most familiar object. From Carmel to Gilead, from Hermon to the pastures of the wilderness of Paran, the green hills of Canaan were covered with flocks. On these same hills and plains the forefathers of the nation—Abraham, Isaac, Israel—had pitched their camps and fed their flocks, when as yet they could not call a rood of land their own. With us the shepherd's trade is a very humble calling. The shepherd, though he may tend the sheep as faithfully as if they were his own, is a hired servant, "whose own the sheep are not." We must dismiss all such associations if we would understand either the poetry or the parables of Scripture. Abraham and his descendants were not the only wealthy chiefs who fed their own flocks and herds. In Homer's poetry, princes and princesses are seen tending their flocks, and kings and rulers are called, as in Scripture, "shepherds of the people." Rightly understood, it is an image of as great dignity as tenderness by which the Lord is spoken of as "the Shepherd of Israel;" and each believer is encouraged to say, with David, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd."

I. DIVINE OWNERSHIP. (Ps. c. 3, Revised Version.) This is a sublime contemplation, full of comfort, but also of awe. "I belong to God." God is the only absolute Owner. "The earth," etc. (Pss. xxiv. 1; xcv. 5; cxv. 16). We talk largely about our possessions—"My money, business, home; my time, labour, life." All well enough—for he "giveth us all," etc. (1 Tim. vi. 17)—if only we never forget that all is his, that *we* belong to him. "Despotism"—*q.d.* absolute, unlimited, lordship—is a word of terror and degradation among men, because of the cruel, selfish, tyrannical use men have made of it. Doubtful if there lives a man who could safely be trusted with it. But in Divine lordship is no shadow of terror, except for the wilfully, wickedly disobedient, no taint of degradation, no suggestion of tyranny or arbitrary caprices. It would be absurd to suppose there can be a *right to do wrong* with God any more than with man. God's wisdom, love, righteousness, are a law to himself. That he is Lord of all is our safety, glory, joy. God must cease to be himself before he can inflict the lightest wrong on the weakest or unworthiest of his creatures.

II. DIVINE GOODNESS, COMPASSION, TENDER AND WATCHFUL CARE. Religion, worthy of the name, cannot subsist on the bare relation of Creator and creature, any more than flowers and fruit on granite; it must be "rooted and grounded in love." The assurance that God cannot possibly inflict wrong might free us from the slavery of fear, which otherwise the thought of his absolute ownership might bring with it, but would not suffice to fill our life with brightness and joy, our heart with trust and courage. To feel in any measure the force and beauty of the similitude, and get into sympathy with the soul of the psalmist, we must get rid of all that is mean, hard, mercenary in our modern English notions, and dress our thoughts in the bright colours of Eastern life; we must see the shepherd opening the well-guarded fold and walking at the head of his own flock, calling now one, now another, by its name, while the sheep willingly follow, for they know and love their shepherd's voice; see him in dewy morning choosing their pasture, at hot noon leading them to some tranquil pool or hidden well, ever on the watch; ready, like David, to do battle with lion, bear, or wolf, in their defence; rather laying down his life than leaving them to perish (John x. 11). "The Lord is my Shepherd," etc. (vers. 1, 2). In vers. 3, 4 the *spiritual meaning* shines through the figure, as in vers. 5, 6 it is laid aside altogether; yet still the psalmist

speaks of the "rod and staff." "Rod," the shepherd's crook, the received emblem of authority, guidance, and discipline. "Staff," that on which one leans, emblem of Divine strength and support. (Only *one* word would be used of a real shepherd; the *two* are employed for the full spiritual meaning.) All is not ease and brightness in the lives which God has in his wisest, tenderest care. Divine shepherding means more than green pastures and still waters; it sometimes means "the valley of the shadow of death." "Paths of righteousness" may be taken to include both the way of duty and the leading of God's providence. In both, the *right* path must be, in the highest sense, the *safe* path, but it may be the path of deadly peril and anguish (Ps. xxxiv. 19). Our blessed Lord's own path led through Gethsemane to Calvary. "The valley of the shadow of death" must not be limited to mean only the actual approach and experience of death; it may stand for any crisis of danger, suffering, or weakness, bodily or spiritual. Travellers tell of a desolate gorge near Ispahan, "the valley of the angel of death." Through such a ravine, trackless, waterless, gloomy with overhanging precipices, where in every cleft wild beasts or robbers may lurk, the psalmist imagines himself led. But the Divine Shepherd is with him: this forbids fear. In Bunyan's glorious dream the valley is placed midway in Christian's pilgrimage—the image of fierce spiritual conflict (Ps. xviii. 5). The hardest trial that can befall the believer is, when tempted to doubt God's goodness, to deem himself forsaken. The answer to all doubt is, "Thou art with me" (Isa. i. 10). The same trials are not appointed for all God's children. Faithful, whom martyrdom awaited in Vanity Fair, had sunshine all through the valley. But there is a point to which all paths converge. If we must not *limit* the figure, still less must we *exclude* that one application common to all, that experience in which we must be *absolutely alone*, unless we can say, "Thou art with me." Death. Here, again, experience wonderfully varies. To some the approach of death is a valley of sunshine, not shadow, or only such as falls from a summer cloud; to some, a momentary passage—through before they know it; to some, dark and rough with long suffering; to a few (even real Christians), gloomy with spiritual conflict. Here, then, above all, we need (both for ourselves and others) that highest application of this comforting image taught by our Lord himself (John x. 1—18, 26—29).

III. THE SAVIOUR'S CONSTANT PRESENCE AND REDEEMING GRACE. (Comp. vers. 1, 2 with John x. 9; vii. 37.) It is his to "restore the soul," to reclaim the lost sheep (Luke xv. 3—7), raise the fallen, refresh the weak, to lead in the path of duty (John viii. 12). But especially in times of urgent need is his presence to be claimed and felt. With Paul and his companions it was a veritable valley of the shadow of death, when "all hope . . . was taken away" (see Acts xxvii. 20, 23; again 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17). Above all, in the hour and moment of death he has passed through it; he has "the keys;" he alone can be with us. Gentle and tranquil often is the actual approach of death; weakness and unconsciousness prevent fear; but take away the *gospel*, take away *Christ*, and who in health and strength can calmly face death, and say, "I will fear no evil"? You may be an unbeliever. Suppose the gospel not true, it does not follow there is *nothing beyond death*. But the believer has a right to say this—knows what is beyond (John xiv. 2—4; Rev. vii. 15—17).

Ver. 6.—*Goodness and mercy*. "Surely goodness," etc. These two words, "goodness" and "mercy," are to be taken together rather than over-curiously distinguished. Yet they are not mere synonyms. Goodness is the stream, mercy the fountain; goodness the open hand of God's bounty, mercy his loving heart. "Mercy" is not to be taken in the restricted sense in which we often use it, as contrasted with justice—goodness to the unworthy, pardon to the guilty. It is (in the Hebrew) the same word often beautifully Englished as "loving-kindness" (e.g. Ps. cvii. 43). "Goodness" reminds us that our nature is a bundle of wants; "mercy," that our deepest, highest need can be satisfied, not by all God's gifts, but only by himself. Faith here employs the great law of experience, and from the past infers the future. Consider (1) *the wealth of hope*, (2) *the blessedness of certainty*, expressed in these words.

I. THE WEALTH OF HOPE. 1. "All the days of my life"—days to come, as in days past. The course of thought in this psalm reminds us of a path which, after crossing peaceful plains and narrow gorges, climbs the mountain, and from its top beholds the

wide, glorious prospect bathed in sunshine. This is the privilege of faith, only faith can see goodness and mercy in *all* God's past dealings, and foresee them in all to come; for that varied fitness which is one great feature of God's loving-kindness, implies a great mixture of rough with smooth, dark and bright. The "restoring of the soul" implies wandering, and means chastening as well as forgiveness. The "rod and staff" are needed in the dark valley; the table is spread in the desert and amongst foes. A child can see that a cricket-ball is a globe; but it needed much philosophy to convince men that this great world, which to ordinary vision is flat, is a globe too. So any eye can see goodness and mercy in health, wealth, prosperity, joy; but in sickness, poverty, bereavement, private or public calamity, we are ready to ask Gideon's question (Judg. vi. 13). It needs strong faith to be sure that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth" (Ps. xxv. 10). To have David's bold hope, we need David's experience, submission, unreserved trust. 2. "And I will dwell . . . for ever." This cannot mean the earthly tabernacle. David could not dwell there; even a priest or Levite could not dwell there "for ever." He means the heavenly temple (Ps. xi. 4). How bright or dim his faith was we know not. But for us *the way into the holiest* is made plain (Heb. ix. 8, 24; x. 19, 20).

II. Here is a GLORIOUS EMPHASIS OF CERTAINTY. "Surely;" "all the days;" "I will dwell," or "I shall dwell;" not simply "I choose and desire," but "I expect assuredly to dwell in my Father's house *for ever*." Beyond the rough, weary, winding path lies rest; beyond the conflict, peace. The mysteries and seeming contradictions of God's dealings, compared with his promises, cannot last long. Faith sees them vanish in the light of eternity. Whence this calm, exulting security? How can one whose life is "a vapour" (Jas. iv. 14), standing on a point which crumbles beneath his feet, ignorant what the next hour may bring, thus boldly challenge the hidden future of earthly life, the boundless future beyond? The answer comes from the Divine Shepherd, the faithful Witness—"Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 1—3, 19; xii. 26; 2 Cor. v. 1; Rom. viii. 35—39).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The good Shepherd and his flock.* This is one of the sweetest of all the psalms. That it was written by him who was raised from having care of a flock to be the king on Israel's throne, there is no reason for doubting, spite of all that destructive critics may say. No amount of Hebrew scholarship can possibly let any one into the deep meaning of this psalm. No attainments in English literature will ever initiate any student into the mysteries of a mother's love, and no attainments in Oriental learning will help any one to learn the secret of the Lord which is here disclosed. There is nothing to equal it in the sacred books of the East; for none but the Hebrews have ever had such a disclosure of God as that in which the writer of this psalm rejoices. Every clause in this psalm is suggestive enough to be the basis of a separate discourse; but in accordance with our plan in this section of the 'Pulpit Commentary,' we deal with it as a unity, indicating the wealth of material for perpetual use therein contained. We have presented to us—*Four aspects of the Shepherd-care of God.*

I. GOD'S SHEPHERD-CARE DISCLOSED IN REVELATION. For the Scripture doctrine of God's relation to his people as their Shepherd, the student may with advantage study and compare the following: Pas. lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 20; lxxix. 13; lxxx. 1; xc. 7; c. 3; cxix. 176; Isa. xl. 11; liii. 6; Jer. xxxi. 10; xxiii. 1—3; Ezek. xxxiv. 1; Micah vii. 14; Zech. xi. 16; xiii. 7; Matt. x. 6; xv. 24; xviii. 12; Luke xv. 4—6; John x. 1—16, 26—29; xxi. 16; Acts xx. 28; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 25; v. 4. These passages summarize Bible teaching on this theme for us. We may set it forth under the following heads: 1. *God is related to men as their Shepherd.* A purely absolute Being out of relation does not exist. To whatever God has made, he stands in the relation of Maker. And when he has made man in his own image, after his likeness, he stands to such a one in a relation corresponding thereto; and of the many names he bears to express that relation, few more tenderly illustrate his watchful care than this word "shepherd." 2. *This relation is manifested in Jesus Christ.* (John x. 1—16.) He claims to be emphatically "the good Shepherd." The apostle speaks of

him as "the Shepherd and Bishop of . . . souls." 3. *As the Shepherd, Jesus came to seek and save the lost.* His mission on earth was emphatically for this. He regards men as his wealth, in which he rejoices; and if they are not under his loving care he misses them—he is conscious of something lacking (Luke xv. 4—6). 4. *He has risen and ascended up on high as the great Shepherd of the sheep* (Heb. xiii. 20). 5. *He now appoints under-shepherds to care for the flock.* (Acts xx. 28.) 6. *As the chief Shepherd, he will again appear.* Then he will gather in and gather home all the flock (1 Pet. v. 4). 7. *Only as he gathers men to himself as their Shepherd, do they find safety and rest.* (1 Pet. ii. 25.) Till then they are homeless wanderers, perpetually in danger of stumbling "over the dark mountains." 8. *When men return to him they find all they need in his Shepherd-care.* (Ps. xxiii.) 9. *This Shepherd-care is for each as well as for all.* Each one may say, "He loved me, and gave himself up for me;" "The Lord is my Shepherd." Let us not forget to note the Shepherd's individualizing care.

II. GOD'S SHEPHERD-CARE EXERCISED IN ACT. The points of detail are set forth in this psalm with exquisite tenderness and beauty.<sup>1</sup> 1. *Repose.* "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." In such a restless age as this, there is no thought which a believer has greater need to appropriate than this (see Mark vi. 31). As physically we must find time for sleep, however severe the pressure of work, so spiritually we must find time for repose. And God's gracious arrangements are planned with a view to this. "He maketh me," etc. The good Shepherd says, "I will give you rest." When he gets back the wandering sheep he lays it on *his own* shoulders (Greek, see Luke xv. 5). The Master never expects his servants to be always on the stretch. He tells them to "rest awhile;" and if they are heedless of this kind monition, he will himself call them out of the rush into the hush of life. It would be well if some Christians thought more of rest in Christ; their work would be richer in quality even if less in quantity. 2. *Refreshment.* "Still waters;" literally, "waters of rest," or refreshment. The believer has no craving thirst: he can ever drink of the living stream, and therewith be refreshed (see John iv. 10; Rev. vii. 17). Dropping the figure, the truth here conveyed is that there shall be a constant supply of the grace of Christ, and of the Spirit of Christ (cf. John vii. 37—39). 3. *Restoration.* (Ver. 3.) This may either mean renewing the strength when worn down, or bringing back after wandering. We need not omit either thought, though the latter seems principally intended. 4. *Leadership.* (Ver. 3.) "Paths of righteousness," i.e. straight paths. This follows on the restoration. Having recalled him from "by-paths," the good Shepherd will lead him in the right way. The sheep can wander wide easily enough, but if they are to be kept in the right way, that can be only through the Shepherd's care. God guides by (1) his Word; (2) his providence; (3) his Spirit. Sometimes, indeed, the way may be dark, even as death itself; still it is the right way (Ps. cvii. 7; Ezra viii. 21—23). 5. *A living presence.* "Thou art with me" (ver. 4). This means, "Thou art continually with me," not merely with me in the darkness, but with me always. The sunshine of the living presence of a Guide, Help, Friend, Saviour, is *always* on the believer's path; and if the mingling of unbelief with faith did not dim the eyesight, he would always rejoice in it. 6. *Discipline.* (Ver. 4.) The rod and staff are special emblems of the Shepherd's care in tending and ruling the flock. The Shepherd chides us when we rove, and uses sometimes sharp measures ere he recalls us. And this *comforts us*! Even so. The disciplinary dealings of our God are among our greatest mercies. 7. *Ample provision.* (Ver. 5.) The riches of God's love and life are the provisions on which we feed, and on which souls can grow and thrive; and these supplies are ministered to the soul through the invisible channels of God's grace, even while enemies prowl around. Yea, we are entertained as guests at the Father's board. The anointing oil is the token of the right royal welcome which the Host delights to give! So rich, so abundant, are the mercies and joys which are vouchsafed, that our "cup runneth over"!

III. THIS SHEPHERD-CARE OF GOD IS ACCEPTED, AND IN IT THE NEEDY ONE

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Perowne's notes on this psalm are of special interest and value. Abundance of illustrations from Oriental customs will also be found in Dr. Thomson's 'Land and the Book,' and Van Lennep's 'Bible Customs in Bible Lands.' Dr. Stoughton and others have developed with great beauty the teachings of the psalm. We have space for only the barest outline.

GLORIES. We can but hint. 1. Here is *appropriation*. "*My Shepherd*" (see John x. 11, 27, 28). 2. Here is *satisfaction*. "I shall not want." 3. Here is *loyalty*. The psalmist not only consents to but delights in this Divine care, and has no wish but to follow where the Shepherd leads. 4. Here is *joy*. This thought is (perhaps latently, but really) in the expression, "Thou art with me." The presence of God is life's exceeding joy. 5. Here is *fearlessness*. "I will fear no evil." Not even the darkest shade can make him fear, for God is with him there. 6. Here is *recognition of the infinite grace of the Shepherd*. (Ver. 3.) "For his Name's sake." Not for our sakes, but for his own; having undertaken to be the Shepherd, he will for his own glory's sake do all that a shepherd's care demands.

IV. THE SHEPHERD-CARE OF GOD IS CELEBRATED IN SONG. The song has a three-fold significance. 1. *It is a song of gratitude*. "Goodness and mercy" mark every feature of the Divine treatment, and they will, to life's end. 2. *It is a song of hope*. The psalmist looks forward, without a moment's fear of the Shepherd ever leaving him (ver. 6). 3. *It is a song and vow of consecration*. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." To what extent David thought of a future state when he wrote these words, we cannot say. Yet his meaning is to some extent clear. The house of God was the place where God made his home and manifested himself to his people (see Ps. cxxxii. 13—16). And the writer says, "Where God makes his home, there shall be mine. He and I will never part company" (see Ps. lxi. 4; xlviii. 14; lxxiii. 24—26). It was not the house of God, but the God of the house, that was to be David's home—and the home of all the saints—for ever and for ever!

There is a picture by Sir Noel Paton, which is a marvellous illustration of this psalm. It is entitled, 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death.' It is worthy of prolonged study. In the foreground is a dismal and dark valley, through which a blasting wind has swept, laying low alike the warrior and the king; the helmet of the one and the crown of the other lie useless on the ground. In the centre of the picture is the Lord Jesus, with a halo of glory over his head, a crown of thorns around his brow, and in one hand a shepherd's staff. On the left is a young maiden, whose face bears traces of the terror she has felt in coming through the valley, and yet of radiant hope as she now sees the good Shepherd there. She grasps his hand; he holds hers; his feet stand on a grave-stone, beneath which lie the remains of the fallen; but where the Shepherd sets his feet, the tombstone is luminous with the words, "Death is swallowed up in victory!" The very sight of that glorious picture weaned one from the vanities of the world, and drew her to Jesus; and in the case of "an old disciple" it completely abolished the fear of death! May we all, by faith, catch a glimpse of our Shepherd, and every fear will vanish quite away!—C.

Vers. 1—6.—*The good Shepherd*. Dr. Arnold said that "amongst Christians, all looking upon the Scriptures as their rule of faith and life, there are particular passages which will most suit the wants of particular minds, and appear to them therefore full of an extraordinary measure of comfort and of wisdom." This is true. Most people have their favourite passages of Scripture. But it may be said of this psalm that it holds a peculiar position. It has for more than three thousand years been one of the most precious possessions of the Church. Jews and Christians alike hold it dear, and there are few, if they were asked, but would thankfully confess that of all the psalms, it was to them the sweetest and most precious. It is among the psalms what Daniel was, compared with other men, "greatly beloved." Why is this? Much, no doubt, depends upon association; but apart from this there are reasons, in the psalm itself, to account for the high place which it holds in all hearts. Three may be mentioned.

I. BECAUSE IT BRINGS GOD BEFORE US IN SO ENDEARING A CHARACTER. He is here represented as a Shepherd and a Host. The better we understand what this meaneth, the more will our hearts go forth to him in love and trust. He is all, and in all. Yea, each of us may say, "He is mine."

II. BECAUSE IT GIVES US SUCH A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. They are the sheep of his pasture, and the guests of his table. Here in this world they are ever under his good and gentle keeping, and when they depart hence, it shall be to dwell in his house for ever. "The psalmist describes himself as one of Jehovah's flock, safe under his care, absolved from all anxieties by the sense of his

protection, and gaining from this confidence of safety the leisure to enjoy, without satiety, all the simple pleasures which make up life—the freshness of the meadow, the coolness of the stream. It is the most complete picture of happiness that ever was or can be drawn. It represents that state of mind for which all alike sigh, and the want of which makes life a failure to most; it represents that heaven, which is everywhere, if we could but enter it, and yet almost nowhere, because so few of us can” (“Ecce Homo”).

III. BECAUSE IT IS ASSOCIATED SO CLOSELY WITH OUR RELIGIOUS LIFE. Though much of Scripture may be neglected, and almost unknown, this psalm is known and loved by all. We learnt it at our mother’s knee, and we have cherished it fondly ever since. To young and old, to the rich and poor, to the people of various lands and tongues, it is equally dear. At home and in the sanctuary it is in constant use. In the time of our joy it has been the vehicle of our gladness, and in days of darkness it has brought us comfort. When weary it gives us rest; when lonely it gives us company; when oppressed with sin and care it leads us to him who can restore our souls, and guide us safely through all difficulties and dangers, onward to the bright future. In itself it is exceedingly precious, but in the light of the gospel, and as interpreted by our dear Lord and Saviour, its value is infinitely enhanced. Jesus “the Good Shepherd” is here, and his sheep hear his voice, and follow him—to glory, honour, and immortality.—W. F.

Vers. 1—6.—*The power of reflection.* The psalmist looks back over his life, and sings with grateful heart of God’s love and care. We may use the psalm as bringing before us some of the changes and contrasts of life.

I. YOUTH AND AGE. This psalm breathes the air of youth. It is the echo of the shepherd-life among the hills of Judah. But the psalmist was now old. Still, he cleaves to God. Happy are they who have sought God early, and whose days from youth to age are linked together by natural piety!

II. HELPLESSNESS AND SECURITY. What creatures are, when left to themselves, more weak and silly than sheep? But under the shepherd’s care they are safe. So it is of the soul. Christ is the good Shepherd, and cares for his sheep. From first to last, and through all changes and dangers, they are safe under his loving guardianship.

III. SORROW AND JOY. How sweet the picture of the flock feeding in “the green pastures,” and by the “still waters”! But there is another scene brought before us—the dark and terrible “valley of the shadow of death.” So there are alternations in the Christian life. If there are lights, there are also shadows. If there are times of sweet rest and comfort, there are also times of struggling and of fear. Mark the order—God does not at once call us to face the dark valley. It comes not at the beginning, but near the end of the Christian’s course. Christ’s disciples who have been with him in “the green pastures,” and whose souls have been “restored,” when they have fallen into sin, by his gracious discipline, are the better fitted for meeting with trial, and for treading with fearless step even the dark valley itself.

IV. WANT AND SATISFACTION. Always there is want on our part, and always there is supply with God. He who has God, the Possessor of all things, has everything. God is not only our Shepherd, but our Host, and the supplies of his table never fail.

V. TRANSITORINESS AND IMMORTALITY. All things here are fading. Sheep and shepherds pass away. Joys and sorrows come to an end. Our life is but as a vapour. But we look to the things that are unseen and eternal. God’s two angels, “goodness and mercy,” not only abide with us here, but will bring us to the everlasting habitation. We shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.—W. F.

Ver. 5.—*A table prepared.* First we may apply this saying to our *daily bread*. Every “table” needs preparation. There is the material food, which may have come from far; and there are the kind hands that have made it ready. But besides this, there is love of God. We recognize that God has to do with our “daily bread.” It is a matter between him and us, “Thou” and “me.” How greatly is every blessing enhanced, when it is taken as from the hand of God! Then circumstances may give a special significance to our commonest mercies; difficulties are overcome, and wants are supplied, in a way that surprises us, and that leads us to confess with



grateful hearts the loving-kindness of the Lord. Again, we may apply this to our *social pleasures*. We are not made to live alone. We crave fellowship. How graciously does God provide for our needs! We have not only the joys of home, but the pleasures of society. There are some who forget God amidst the stir and the seductions of life. They conduct their business and enjoy their pleasures "without God" (Isa. v. 8—12). But it is not so with the righteous. They desire to set the Lord always before them, and especially to acknowledge his goodness and mercy in the manifold social blessings which they enjoy. But chiefly should we apply the text to our *religious privileges*. The Word of God is as a "table" prepared for us. Think how much had to be done and suffered before we could have the Bible as a book free to every one of us! Think also how much there is in this blessed book to refresh and bless our souls!—a "feast of fat things." Public worship is another "table" spread for us. When the Lord's day comes round, what multitudes come together, and there is bread enough and to spare for them all! More particularly it may be said that the Lord's Supper is a "table" prepared by God for his people. Here we see his wise forethought. He saw what was needful, and designed this feast for the good of his people. Here we see his loving care. His hand is seen in everything from first to last. The table is the Lord's table. The "bread" is his "body;" the wine is "his blood;" the voice that says, "Come, eat," is his voice. There is not only preparation of the table, but of the guests. When we think of what we were and what we are; of what we deserved and of what we have received,—it is with wonder, love, and praise that we say, "Thou preparest a table before me." We have "enemies," but they have not prevailed. We can think of them with pity, and forgive them; we can even pray for them, that they may be converted into friends, and, should they continue alienated and hostile, we can face them without fear, because "greater is he that is with us, than all they that are against us." The future is for us bright with hope. The dark valley is behind, and the power of God before. The table below is the earnest of the table above.—W. F.

Ver. 6.—"*All the days of my life.*" Life is made up of "days." Confidence in God gives—

I. **STRENGTH FOR LIFE'S WORK.** "I shall not want." God is able to meet all our needs. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. xxxiii. 25; Phil. iv. 13).

II. **SUPPORT UNDER LIFE'S TRIALS.** There will be changes. The "green pastures" may give place to the dark valley. There may be loss of health, of property, of friends; there may be unknown trials. "Thou art with me."

III. **FULFILMENT OF LIFE'S GREAT HOPES.** It is a great thing to be one of Christ's flock, ever under the Shepherd's tender care. But more is promised. There will be the going in and out, and finding pasture—all through; but the end is not here, but above. The best is to come. The perfection of manhood; the "rest that remaineth;" the "fulness of joy;" the glorious fellowships that know no break, and that bring no pain, are in our Father's house.

"For ever with the Lord!  
Amen, so let it be;  
Life from the dead is in that word,  
'Tis immortality."

W. F.

Vers. 1—4.—*God's providential care.* "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want," etc. God's care and providence over man are denoted by the following things.

I. **HE GIVES REST TO THE WEARY.** "Maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Man is a combatant; he has a fight to maintain, a work to do; and he shall have seasons to rest from his exhaustion. He is a pilgrim-traveller. He has rest from bodily toil. So also rest from spiritual work. But the *rest is spiritual in its kind*. Not mental *inactivity*. But a clearer perception of those *grand truths* which afford the truest relief from the distraction of the conflict. Composure amidst distractions. The *blessed end* we aim at, and the *certain issue* of it.

II. **HE RENEWS THE EXHAUSTED STRENGTH OF MAN.** (Vers. 2, 3.) Religious strength consists in the power to do and the power to suffer—or courage and fortitude.

This power to do—to conquer sin in ourselves and in the world—is strengthened by *unshaken faith in God's truth, and by the power of self-denial*. These are God's gifts, not by any direct act of his, but as the consequence of striving to do his will.

III. GOD WILL AFFORD PROTECTION IN THE DARKEST AND MOST DIFFICULT TIMES. (Ver. 4.) Death is not always dark or difficult to good men. But the general tendency is to view death as dark and evil, and to fear it on those accounts. Darkness creates a feeling of *uncertainty and a desire for guidance*. God has removed the uncertainty and affords us guidance. The evil of death is the sense of guilt. Christ gives us the victory over that evil by proclaiming the forgiveness of the Father, and the removal of our sin. All who submit to God's guidance may claim him for their Shepherd. Jesus Christ fulfils the character of man's true Shepherd.—S.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Fulness of joy*. The psalmist has hitherto spoken of the care of the good Shepherd in removing the miseries, pains, and sufferings which this life brings—of the rest, refreshing, and protection he had received. Now he rises higher into the rich fulness of joy he receives, and the good things of God's house. Four principal ideas here.

I. THAT THERE IS AN ABUNDANT PROVISION FOR EVERY WANT. (Ver. 5.) For all *outward and inward* want. A feast or banquet is spread for us by a royal Host. There is a feast provided for the senses and appetites in outward nature—if we do not turn it into a riot and a debauch. The enjoyment of it arises from and depends on *labouring for it and the moderate use of it*. There is also the greater feast provided for the *mind and heart*, in finding the truth and responding to the love which God has set forth, as the means of building up the true life. *Christ* is the Bread and Wine of life. David's honour as God's guest was the greater, that it was witnessed by those who had been his enemies.

II. HIS HEART WAS FULL OF SOLEMN THANKFULNESS AND JOY. (Ver. 5, "Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows.") He had a most vivid perception that the feast, the anointing, the fulness, all came from the Divine hand. This sense of God in our lives makes a whole world of difference to our experience. No gratitude possible without it. No sense of the glory of life without it.

III. OUR ASSURANCE OF THE CONSTANCY OF THE DIVINE LOVE AND GOODNESS. (Ver. 6.) What God had been to him in the past, he would continue to be in the future. He had suffered, had been weary, been persecuted, had had battles to fight, had been bewildered in his path; but God had been his Guide and Deliverer, and would continue to be all through the remainder of his life.

IV. HE WOULD BE BLESSED WITH THE FELLOWSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP OF GOD FOR EVER. (Ver. 6.) This is the meaning of "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," so as to be near him and have constant intercourse with him. It includes all kinds of intercourse with God—worship, communion, sonship, obedience, guidance, so as to fill the whole life of thought and feeling and action. "For ever" looking onwards, perhaps, dimly, to the life beyond, which was not so clear to him as it is to us.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXIV.

AT first sight this psalm seems to be composed of two quite separate fragments (vers. 1—6 and vers. 7—10); whence Ewald has laid it down that, in their origin, the two parts were wholly separate, and that the union took place subsequently. But a careful consideration reveals points of unity which favour the view that the connection was intended from the first, and is essential and congenial. "The glory of the approach-

ing Lord is, in both parts of the psalm, the fundamental idea" (Hengstenberg). Both parts speak of an ascent into the holy hill of Zion, the first manifestly (ver. 3), the second by implication (vers. 7, 9). If we regard part ii., with most critics, as intended to be sung by the choir of Levites, which bore and accompanied the ark of the covenant as it was brought to the gates of the tabernacle or of the citadel of Zion, then it is clear that in part i. we have a very suitable introduction. Part i. puts forward

two ideas—the infinite glory of God (vers. 1, 2), and the need of holiness in all that draw near to him (vers. 3—6). To impress on the minds of those present the infinite glory of God is the main object of part ii.; while, if we regard the lifting up of the gates as emblematic of the lifting up of men's hearts, we may say that the direct teaching of the part is the need of a pure spirit of devotion in worshippers.

David's authorship is allowed by most critics; and the most probable period of the composition is the time when David determined to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obad-Edom to the tabernacle which he had prepared for it on Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 12).

The psalm is made up of three strophes: vers. 1, 2; vers. 3—6; and vers. 7—10. The first and second are closely connected; the third is a little detached.

Ver. 1.—The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. God's glory was set forth in Ps. xix. from a consideration of the heavens (vers. 1—6); here it is manifested from the other half of creation—the earth. The whole earth, and all its fulness, is his. He made it, and he remains its sole Owner and Master. There is no inferior *δημιουργός*, as some believed, who framed it and governs it. All its marvels, all its beauty, all its richness, proceed from God alone. The world, and they that dwell therein. "The world" (עֲוֵלָם) seems to be here synonymous with "the earth" (אֶרֶץ). Not only do its material products belong to God, but its inhabitants also.

Ver. 2.—For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods (comp. Gen. i. 9). God has established the earth above the seas and floods, causing it to "appear," and thus making it a fitting habitation for man. Hence his right of property in the earth and in all the dwellers on it. They exist through his providential care (comp. Ps. civ. 6—9).

Ver. 3.—Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? The second strophe opens with one of David's sudden transitions. Who is worthy to be brought into contact with a God of such might and glory? Who shall ascend into his hill? God's "hill" is, in reality, the highest heaven, wherein he has his dwelling-place. Its representative on earth was, at this time, the Mount Zion, where it was already determined in the Divine counsels that the temple should be built, and whither David was now about to transfer the ark of the covenant (see the introductory paragraph). David asks the

question as a warning to the Levites, whom he was about to employ in the transport of the ark, that they might purify themselves in heart and soul before venturing to take part in the solemn ceremony. Or who shall stand in his holy place? Who, i.e., shall stand and minister inside the tabernacle, when the ark has been placed therein, and it has thus become, in a special sense, God's holy place?

Ver. 4.—He that hath clean hands. He whose hands are free from acts of sin (comp. Ps. xv. 2—5), and not only so, but he who hath also a pure heart, since the heart is the source of all evil (Matt. xv. 19, 20), and wrongful words and wicked acts are the necessary results of the heart being impure. "God's demands upon his people," as Hengstenberg observes, "go beyond the domain of action. Those only see him—those only are fit to ascend into his hill—who have a pure heart." Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity; i.e. who has not lusted after vain and worthless things, whose desires are subdued, brought into captivity to the Law of God, and kept under strict control. This is really implied in purity of heart. Nor sworn deceitfully. False swearing is the worst—or, at any rate, one of the worst—sins of the tongue. The psalmist means to say that a man is not fit to draw near to God unless he is righteous in act, in thought, and in word.

Ver. 5.—He shall receive the blessing from the Lord; rather, *blessing*, without the article. On the pure in thought, word, and act, God's blessing is sure to rest (see Matt. v. 8). And righteousness from the God of his salvation. To the man who comes to God with an honest and true heart, God will give additional graces, such as justification, assurance, perseverance, unwavering hope, perfect charity.

Ver. 6.—This is the generation of them that seek him. Men with this character impressed upon them are the "generation," the stamp of men, whom God will recognize and accept as his worshippers, true seekers after him. That seek thy face, O Jacob. The LXX. have, ζητούντων τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἰακώβ, whence some suppose אֶלֶיךָ to have fallen out of the Hebrew text. This, no doubt, is possible, and removes all difficulty. But it is better to loose a Gordian knot than to cut it. We may keep the present text, and obtain a satisfactory sense, by regarding "Jacob" as grammatically in apposition with "generation," and translating, "This is the generation of them that seek him—that seek thy face—even Jacob." All they are not Israel who are of Israel (Rom. ix. 6). The true Jacob consisted of those Israelites who answered to the character described in

ver. 4. *Selah*. A break, or pause, here occurred, while the procession of Levites advanced to the very gates of the sanctuary. Then the strain was resumed—the choir being divided into two parts, which sang antiphonally.

Ver. 7.—*Lift up your heads, O ye gates.* So sang one half of the choir, calling upon the gates to throw themselves wide open to their full height, that free entrance might be given to the approaching sacred fabric. And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors. Pleonastic, but giving the emphasis of repetition, and adding the epithet “everlasting,” because the tabernacle was viewed as about to be continued in the temple, and the temple was designed to be God’s house “for ever” (1 Kings viii. 13). And the King of glory shall come in. God was regarded as dwelling between the cherubim on the mercy-seat, where the Shechinah from time to time made its appearance. The entrance of the ark into the tabernacle was thus the “coming in of the King of glory.”

Ver. 8.—*Who is this King of glory?* The other half of the choir, acting as keepers of the doors, inquires, as if ignorant of the motive and character of the procession, “Who is this King of glory?”—who is it to whom ye give this high-sounding appellation, and to whom ye require us to open?

And the reply follows from the previous speakers. The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. It is Jehovah, the Strong and Mighty One—strong in himself, mighty in his acts, mighty especially in battle; whom ye may therefore be glad to receive among you as your Defence. It is this King for whom we demand admission.

Ver. 9.—*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.* A repetition of ver. 7, the first part of the choir reiterating its challenge.

Ver. 10.—*Who is this King of glory?* The second part of the choir reiterates its question, as though not yet quite understanding. “Who is *he*, this King of glory?” and the first, slightly varying its answer, replies, The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. The epithet, “Lord of hosts,” well known at the time (1 Sam. i. 11; 2 Sam. v. 10; vi. 2; vii. 18, 26, 27, etc.), made all clear, and, the gates being thrown open, the ark was brought in, and set in its place in the midst of the tabernacle (2 Sam. vi. 17). It has been generally recognized that the reception of the ark into the tabernacle on Mount Zion typified the entrance of our Lord into heaven after his ascension, whence our Church appoints this psalm as one of those to be recited on Ascension Day.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The world for God.* “The earth is the Lord’s,” etc. The world-wide breadth and grandeur of the Old Testament Scriptures, contrasted with the local narrowness and national bigotry of the Jewish people, is among the most impressive notes of its Divine inspiration. Every Israelite was trained in two convictions, which lay close to the heart of the national religion: (1) that Israel, in a sense that put a wide difference between them and all other nations, was God’s chosen people; and (2) that the land which God had given as an inalienable inheritance was peculiarly Jehovah’s land. What the Israelite was apt to lose sight of was that these gifts and distinctions were not for Israel’s own glory, but for the good of mankind. The Holy Land was to be the seed-plot of the world. Probably no ancient nation could have grasped this grand idea. But the spirit of prophecy fills the pages of Old Testament Scripture with God’s all-embracing purpose; brightens them with the promise of a universal kingdom and religion; claims the whole world for Jehovah.

I. THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AS THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS HIS, BY RIGHT OF CREATION. This is the first lesson of religion (Gen. i. 1). David beautifully expresses this (1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12, 14). Men may call themselves lords of the soil, and make what laws they choose about land; but in literal truth, every inch of earth, from centre, to surface, belongs to “the blessed and only Potentate.” The wealthiest owner, the most absolute despot, is but a tenant-at-will, who may at any moment receive notice to quit (Luke xii. 20). Bear in mind that creation implies design. Every creature, every atom, force, law, existed in the Infinite Eternal Mind, before “he spake, and it was done” (Ps. xxx. 6—9).

II. AS THE OBJECT OF HIS INEXHAUSTIBLE, UNIVERSAL CARE, KNOWLEDGE, BOUNTY. Men talk and think as though God were an absentee owner; at most a constitutional Sovereign, ruling by laws that restrict his action and bind his will. This is in truth an absurd fancy, yet one which often passes for scientific. Even really godly people have

often a way of talking as though God's providence were partial, intermittent, an occasional interference with the regular course of nature. The glorious truth, alike rational and scriptural, is that "he maketh his sun to rise . . . and sendeth rain," feeds the birds, clothes the lilies, makes all events to "work together for good" (Matt. v. 45; vii. 26, etc.; Rom. viii. 28; Ps. cxix. 89—91). There is no rational standing ground between the fancy (void of shadow of proof) that atoms and forces, with their intricate laws of action and reaction, have an independent existence—a self-acting machine, grinding out irre-istible fate; and the faith that God lives in every atom of his universe; nor can their slightest movement evade his knowledge and care, or gainsay his will.

III. AS THE SCENE AND FIELD OF HUMAN LIFE, in which he is everywhere to be acknowledged and glorified. The first claim on life, with all its possessions, faculties, opportunities, is that God be loved and honoured (Rev. iv. 11). The hard boundary-line men draw between things *sacred* and *secular* is never recognized in God's Word. All is sacred; for all is his (1 Tim. iv. 4). On this text St. Paul rests the doctrine both of Christian liberty and of Christian self-denial; the right freely to enjoy what God freely gives; and the duty to abstain from any use of these gifts through which he might be dishonoured (1 Cor. x. 25—31). To all the motives drawn from the foregoing considerations, the gospel adds those drawn from God's "unspeakable Gift," and from our redemption through the blood of Christ and new creation by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Rom. xii. 1).

Ver. 4.—*A high standard of practical morality.* "Clean hands, and a pure heart." It would be impossible to condense into so few words a more beautiful and comprehensive description of true holiness. The gospel reveals *motives* and offers *grace* beyond not only the experience, but the conception, of Old Testament saints. But it cannot set a *higher standard of practical morality* than this: *blameless conduct, and right motives; clean hands, and a pure heart.* To come up perfectly to this mark would be to resemble him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," and who could safely challenge his bitterest enemies, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John viii. 46).

I. "CLEAN HANDS" is a phrase containing a fullness of varied meaning. 1. *The hand is in Scripture the symbol of work* (Pss. xcv. 5; cxi. 7; Eccles. ix. 10); the gospel version of which is Col. iii. 23. "Clean hands" in this sense are hands whose work is faithful and thorough. Among the evil omens of our time is a decay of honest pride in good work—a tendency to substitute cheap show for solid value. Every stroke of unfaithful work is a nail in the coffin of national honour and prosperity. Here religion steps in to our rescue. The Bible puts great honour on work. Every Christian should look on his daily work as a ministry to man for God's sake. If he would have "clean hands," he must engage in no business which cannot be so regarded. 2. *The hand is the symbol of earning and paying, getting and giving.* (Prov. x. 4.) "Clean hands" are hands never defiled by unjust gain, never disgraced by withholding what is due (see Isa. xxxiii. 15). 3. *The hand is the symbol of mutual faith and honour.* To "lift up the hand" is to pledge one's truth (Gen. xiv. 22; Deut. xxxiii. 40). "Clean hands" therefore mean unblemished honour, inviolable faithfulness (Ps. xv. 4). 4. *The hand is the symbol of power and of conduct.* Hence the prophet's indignant denunciation (Isa. i. 15), and St. Paul's injunction (1 Tim. ii. 8). 5. *Clean hands are hands not only kept clean, but washed.* The purest hands have on them stains that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse. And this can cleanse even the foulest. Our greatest poet has pointed out the anguish of a guilt-burdened conscience—

"What! will these hands ne'er be clean? . . .

All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."

But "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

II. "A PURE HEART." Inward holiness: right motives, feelings, aims. The hands without the heart may pass muster in human eyes. Worldly morality concerns itself rather with conduct than motives (1 Sam. xvi. 7). But the grave characteristic of Bible morality is that everywhere the worth of actions is made wholly to depend on their motives. The unaccomplished purpose, if sincere, is accepted (1 Kings viii. 18).

The holiest service, with impure motive, is hateful to God (Prov. xxi. 27). Thus that modern philosophy, which seeks to derive conscience from the experience of the usefulness to society of certain actions, utterly breaks down. The judgments of enlightened conscience, and all just praise or blame, take account, not of outward actions as such, or their consequences, but of *motives*. St. James puts these together (Jas. iv. 8). He that would keep "clean hands" must put up David's prayer (Ps. li. 10, 11).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—4.**—*Celebrating the Real Presence.* (For opening or reopening a church.) There seems to be no very great difficulty in finding the occasion on which this magnificent psalm was originally composed. In all probability it was written by David, and sung on the occasion of bringing up the ark of God to Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 2, 18; vii. 25, 26). Some regard it as prophetic, and call it "the Song of Advent," others "the Song of the Ascension." Others again apply it individually, and look upon it as appropriate for one who would open his heart to God, and let the King of glory enter therein. There are, however, so many Scriptures bearing more manifestly on these three latter applications, and there is such a fulness of instruction in dealing with the truths which are immediately suggested by the song as prepared for the historic occasion above referred to, that we shall simply invite the reader to follow the course of thought suggested thereby. All the historic information needed may be gathered from the writers referred to below; especially from the brilliant and inspiring description of Dean Stanley.<sup>1</sup> The psalm discloses to us the grand revelation of God which the Hebrews possessed, and the joy which they felt at his making his dwelling-place among them. From the Hebrew standpoint we are bound to move forward to that of the Christian. Remembering this, let us note—

I. THE NAME AND DOMAIN OF JEHOVAH ARE IMMEASURABLY VAST; while the greatness of his attributes, as disclosed to his people of the olden time, is correspondingly august. The various names given to him in this psalm show us how far removed were the Hebrews' thoughts of God from those to which other nations of the earth had attained. The various expressions for the Name of God which are found here remove us very far from anything like anthropomorphism. 1. *Jehovah*; pure being—he who is, was, and will ever be. 2. *The God of salvation*. 3. *The God of Jacob* (LXX.), who can note the individual while watching over all. 4. *The King of glory* in whom the highest glory centres, and from whom all created glory proceeds, of every kind. 5. *The Lord of the whole earth*. The wide difference in this respect between the thoughts of the heathen and those of Israel is seen in 1 Kings xx. 23; Dan. ii. 11. The idea of local and tutelary deities is common enough among pagan nations. But that of one God supreme and alone is taught by revelation (Deut. vi. 4). 6. *The Lord of hosts*; Lord of all the hosts of heaven, whether the hosts of stars that roll at his command, or the hosts of seraphim and cherubim who wait upon his word. All these names of God are now a joy to the believer. He sees more in each of them than the saints of old could possibly do; and seeing God as revealed in Christ, he can add yet other names, and say: 7. "God is Spirit;" "God is light;" "God is love," adding to the latter the touching words, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Thus while the universe is no tax on his power, the humblest child may nestle in his love.

"His greatness makes us brave as children are  
When those they love are near."

II. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE SOME SPOTS WHERE HIS PRESENCE IS SPECIALLY SEEN. "The hill of the Lord" (ver. 3); "His holy place" (ver. 3). A careful student of the Scriptures may find matter of absorbing interest in two disclosed facts: (1) that the

<sup>1</sup> For historic information, see Perowne's introduction to this psalm; Dean Stanley's 'Lectures on the Jewish Church,' 2nd series, lect. xxiii.; Edersheim's 'Bible History,' iv. 177; Geikie's 'Half-hours with the Bible,' vol. iii. ch. ix.; Kitté's 'Daily Bible Readings' (Porter's edit.), vol. iii. pp. 341—351. The remarks of Dr. Moll (in Schaff's Lange), Delitzsch, Hengstenberg, and the introductions to this psalm in 'The Cambridge Bible' and in the R.T.S. new edition of the 'Book of Psalms,' are worth notice.

great aim of God's revelation is to bring about the dwelling of man with God, and of God with man (cf. Exod. xxv. 8); (2) that this is one of the thoughts of God unfolded in its different stages in the Scriptures. 1. There was the patriarchal period, when each holy man might commune with God, or erect his altar or his Bethel anywhere. 2. There was the Mosaic and prophetic period, during which there was one place that the Lord chose to put his Name there. 3. There is the present Christian period, of which it is said (1) in prophecy (Mal. i. 11); (2) in promise (Matt. xviii. 20), that wherever God's people meet in his name, he will be with them. 4. There will be the heavenly state (Rev. xxi. 3, 22, 23). We have not yet come to the rest and inheritance which the Lord hath promised to give us. The fourth stage is yet ahead. The second is past. The third is ours. To the believer, any room where but two or three meet in their Saviour's name may be as really a house of worship as the proudest cathedral. Such worship-rooms were common in the early Christian age.<sup>1</sup> The worship itself consecrates the place. And the presence of God is in it, because it is with those who worship there. *No Church has any monopoly of this Real Presence.* To all believers the Living One has said, "Go! teach, baptize, and lo! I am with you all the days, to the end of the age!"

III. THE LIVING PRESENCE OF GOD, WHEREVER REALIZED, SHEDS A RADIANT OF GLORY. The ark was to the Hebrews the symbol, sign, and token of the Divine presence, and when it was conveyed to the Hill of Zion, that hill at once attained a proud pre-eminence, before which hills of far greater height became quite insignificant. Hence Ps. lxxviii. 16.<sup>2</sup> And whether in earlier or later days, in tabernacle or temple, God's "way" was "in the sanctuary." Note: The tokens of God's presence, and these alone, will light up any place of worship with glory. That presence is realized: 1. In the blest fellowship the saints have in their worship, with all the redeemed on earth and in heaven, as well as with the Lord. 2. In the concert of prayer, as they plead for each other and for all men. 3. In the messages of love that come to them from their Father's Word. 4. In partaking of the tokens of love which are given in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. 5. And in the reception of new blessing and power for life's service through the energy of the Holy Ghost, who in his blest fellowship quickens and inspires. Surely, any place where all these boons are enjoyed is indeed radiant with light and blessing!

IV. ALTHOUGH THIS PRESENCE MAY FILL THE HOUSE OF WORSHIP, NOT ALL THEREIN WILL BE EQUALLY CONSCIOUS OF IT. Surely this must be the deep meaning of vers. 3—6. The question in ver. 3 is unintelligible. As a matter of fact, any one could ascend the hill of the Lord, and even take up his abode in the sacred precincts. But physical proximity to the ark of God, and spiritual nearness to the God of the ark, are two very different things. It is easy to be where God is blessing his people; it is another thing to be one of those who get the blessing. Moral and spiritual receptivity is needful if we would enjoy the fulness of that blessing. Mechanism is not inspiration. Posture is not devotion. The Real Presence cannot be had through the bread and wine of the sacrament. It will not come to any through a line of officiating priests. While no one may limit the extent of the blessing so as to shut out any true worshipper, on the other hand, not even the holiest place will ensure the blessing to any except the worshipper is true. "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

V. BY SUCH AS WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH, THE SACRED GATES MAY BE OPENED WITH JOYOUS ACCLAM, TO RECEIVE THE KING OF GLORY. (Vers. 7—10.) Yea, "the King of glory shall come in." He will. There is no doubt of it. The gates will not be opened in vain. The joyous host of devout souls wending their way thither will not be doomed to disappointment (Pss. xxvi. 8; xxvii. 4—6; xlii. 4; xliii. 3, 4; xlvi. 9; lxxi. 13—19; lxxii. 16, 17; lxxvii. 13; lxxxiv. 1; lxxxvii. 14—19; cxvii. 19—27; cxxxii. 13—16). They may take up the grand choral song of this psalm, and make it their own. That they and God thus *may* meet is the only reason why these houses of worship are erected. That they *do* thus meet, the experience of the saints declares. That they *will* thus meet, the promises of God's Word ensure. No:

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dr. Jacob on 'The Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament.'

<sup>2</sup> See rendering of this in notes of 'Variarum Bible.'

The dignity of God's worshippers. Not only do they go to speak to the King, but the King of heaven comes to meet them!—C.

Vers. 1—10.—*The King of glory.* Christ as the King of glory is represented here in three aspects.

I. AS THE LORD OF THE EARTH. (Vers. 1, 21.) The kingdoms of this world are limited. Some are larger than others, but the largest has its bounds (Esth. i. 1; Dan. iv. 1). Christ's kingdom is unlimited. Go where you will, pass from one country to another, visit different peoples, with different customs and laws, you can never get beyond its bounds. Like the sky, it covers all—"the earth, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." The grounds of this universal Lordship are absolutely just and sufficient (ver. 2). He is the Proprietor, because he is the Maker; he is the Ruler, because by him all things subsist. While this belief should call forth our admiration and trust, it should also quicken our humility, and excite us to watchfulness and care as to the use we make of all things committed to us. We are occupants, not owners; we are stewards, not proprietors; we are servants, not lords.

II. THE SUPREME JUDGE OF MANKIND. The question asked here is one of transcendent importance. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" It comes home to each of us. It demands consideration. It presses for a reply. Who is fit for this high honour? Who is worthy of this holy fellowship? Who is capable of entering upon this transcendent service? The question relates to character; and the answer is given by him who alone can rightly judge as to character. In the deepest sense the description can be applied only to Christ Jesus. But the words hold good also of all who are Christ's (ver. 6), the true community of Israel, who have been redeemed and sanctified for the service of the Holy One. As Dean Stanley had said, "The answer is remarkable, as expressing, in language so clear that a child may understand it, the great doctrine that the only service, the only character, which can be thought worthy of such a habitation, is that which conforms itself to the laws of truth, honesty, humility, justice, love. Three thousand years have passed; Jerusalem has fallen; the Jewish monarchy, and priesthood, and ritual, and religion have perished; but the words of David still remain, with hardly an exception, the rule by which all wise and good men would measure the worth and value of men, the greatness and the strength of nations."

III. THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE. (Vers. 7—10.) Under the grand imagery of this passage we may find some important truths. 1. *That Christ is the King of glory.* He has vindicated his right to this title on earth and in heaven. He is the highest Manifestation of the Divine Majesty. 2. *That as the King of glory he claims admission to the heart of man.* In his Word and by the providence of his Spirit he comes to all. He offers himself in the plenitude of his grace and power as a Saviour. If we are overawed by his greatness, we are conquered by his love. He will not force an entrance, nor will he come in secretly or by stealth. If we are to receive him, it must be willingly, and with all honour and welcome as our Lord and King. 3. *That as the King of glory he is destined to reign everlastingly over his people.* "Of his kingdom there shall be no end."—W. F.

Ver. 3.—This psalm breathes *the spirit of aspiration*. It speaks of the earth as the Lord's; but we are not to rest with the earth. The call is, "Who will ascend?" As one of our own poets has said—

"Not to the earth confined, ascend to heaven."

Aspiration is an instinct of the heart. The young man is full of hope. Nothing seems to him impossible. His spirit leaps within him, longing to take part with others in the struggle of life.

"Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new,  
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do."

Often such aspirations come to little. Work is hard. Progress is difficult. Things turn out so different from what was expected. Some fail. Others falter and lose heart. Others sink down to the dull routine of business, and the bright vision that charmed their youthful fancy fades away. But there are some who succeed. They have had ambitions, and they have stuck to them. They have had purposes, and have



courageously carried them out. But if their aspirations have been limited to this world, success brings no real satisfaction. Byron found himself famous, and for a while was a great power; but how miserable were his last days! Even Gibbon, when he had brought his great work, that cost three and thirty years of labour, to an end, felt anything but quite satisfied. "I will not dissemble," he writes at Lausanne, "the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious" (vol. i. p. xxiii.). Our aspirations need guidance and support. The true ascent is to "the hill of the Lord," and "his holy place." The Hebrews had much to stimulate them in the very conditions of things. They had to "go up" to Jerusalem, and when they went to the house of the Lord, the way was "still upward"—from the entrance to the holy place (Ezek. xli. 7). And all this was made helpful to them as regards higher things. But we have greater aids and encouragements. We have "the hope of glory;" the lives of the good who have gone before us; the voices of the prophets; the example of our blessed Lord; and the promise of the Holy Spirit. Every true life has its Jerusalem, and we must "go from strength to strength," still upward, if we are at last to reach the joy and peace of God. There are difficulties, as there will be in the way of all high endeavours; but we are comforted with the promise of help and the assurance of success. Thought is good, "meditated action" is better, but right action carried out, and that to the end, is best of all. If we are of the generation that seek God (ver. 6), then our motto will be, "Death to evil, and life to good." If we open our hearts to the King of glory, then under his leading our path shall ever be onward and upward, till at last we stand in the holy place, and receive the blessing from the Lord.

"Breathe me upward, thou in me  
Aspiring, who art the Way, the Truth, the Life!  
That no truth henceforth seem indifferent,  
No way to truth laborious, and no life—  
Not even this life I live—intolerable."

('Aurora Leigh.')

W. F.

**Vers. 1—6.**—*Who can dwell with God?* The twenty-third psalm concludes with the hope of dwelling in the house of the Lord for ever, and this psalm asks, "Who is qualified to dwell with God in his holy place?" Composed on the bringing of the ark to Mount Zion. Vers. 1—6 are introductory.

**I. GOD'S EXALTED NATURE.** (Vers. 1, 2.) Relation of land to water in Gen. i. 9. God's creative universal power was connected in the mind of the psalmist with: 1. *His omniscience.* He saw with unerring truth the character of those who professed to worship and serve him. 2. *His holiness.* None but the pure in heart could have fellowship with him. The hypocrite, therefore, could not hope for acceptance. "God is a Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." And he was a Holy Spirit, who could have no fellowship with the untruthful and unclean.

**II. QUALIFICATIONS OF WORSHIPPERS.** (Ver. 4.) 1. *Pure conduct.* "Clean hands"—significant of conduct—the outward life of action, which must be unstained and righteous. No man's inward life can be right if his outward life be unclean or unjust. 2. *Pure thoughts and affections.* "A pure heart." The heart is the seat of the purposes and desires, and if these be not in the main and on the whole pure—"the single eye"—the whole character and life are defiled. "Not that which goeth into a man defileth him, but that which cometh out of him." "He hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity or falsehood." He is not pursuing vain or untrue things—things which are only a show, but have no substance. 3. *Pure speech.* "Nor sworn deceitfully." His word corresponds to his thought, and is not uttered to deceive. This requires not only truthfulness, but *courage*, to brave all consequences of being truthful. A man who combines these attributes can live in God's highest presence, and have fellowship and friendship with him.

**III. THE REWARD OF SUCH WORSHIPPERS.** (Vers. 5, 6.) 1. *Increase of righteousness.*

By seeing God and having real communion with him. The "blessing" he receives is this increase of righteousness. No priestly benediction avails, unless there be the moral condition indicated. 2. *He shall seek the face of God with increased earnestness.* "To seek the face of the Lord" is to be greatly concerned about his favour and the doing his will. And this can come only as the result of previous effort and practice.—S.

Vers. 7-10.—*Appeal for God's entrance into the heart of man.* Sung on the entry of the ark into the ancient gates of the fortress of Jerusalem. The singers, two choirs of priests—the one bearing the ark, the other already stationed there as warders. First choir demanding admission; second reply from within, "Who is this King of glory?" The transaction may suggest and represent the appeal made for God's entrance into the heart of man. Then—

I. THE LANGUAGE WOULD REPRESENT THE MIND OF MAN AS GOD'S TEMPLE. What views of our nature are suggested by such a representation? 1. *The religious destination of man.* A temple is built for religious uses and objects. So this is the grand destiny for which man is created—religion. Physical, intellectual, moral destiny. 2. *Represents the mind as a sanctuary for the Divine habitation.* The glory of God dwelt between the cherubim; but man is God's grandest Shechinah. This is fully recognized and asserted in the New Testament. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you;" "Ye are God's temple."

II. GOD AS A GLORIOUS KING IS EVER SEEKING ADMISSION INTO OUR MINDS. 1. *The King of glory assumes the attitude of a majestic suppliant.* "Let the King come in." "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Illustrates the voluntary nature of our relations with God. Wonderful! Infinity pleading with the finite; majesty supplicating meanness; holiness stooping before the unholy! 2. *The purpose for which he seeks to occupy our minds.* To draw us into friendship and harmony with himself, and to establish a glorious rule over us. We are incapable of self-rule, and cannot exist alone. And this is our proper and normal relation to him.

III. THE EXERCISE OF MIND BY WHICH GOD IS ADMITTED INTO OUR NATURE. A lifting up of its powers—an elevation and expansion of them—in the following ways. 1. *It is the reaching forth of our powers towards the Infinite Being.* An effort to embrace our infinite and eternal concerns—a going forth out of the transient and visible into the everlasting and spiritual. 2. *The active reception of God enlarges our best powers and affections.* It enlarges and exalts love, will, and conscience.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXV.

THIS is the second of the "alphabetic psalms." It is not so irregular as Ps. ix., but still is defective in some respects, the letters *beth* and *vau* being omitted in their proper place, *resh* being substituted for *koph*, and a second *he* being added at the end. Some of these variations may be accidental, but others would seem to have been intentional, being found also in Ps. xxxiv. The psalm consists of a number of prayers, reflections, and pious ejaculations, not drawn up in any systematic order, and not very clearly connected by any single line of thought. The separate portions have, however, in many cases much beauty; and it is observed that "some of the most precious spiritual treasures of the Church have been drawn from this psalm" (Kay). The

thoughts are quite worthy of the writer to whom it is attributed in the title, viz. David; and the alphabetic arrangement, which has been urged against David's authorship, is scarcely conclusive on the point. Many of the best critics regard Ps. ix. and xxxiv., which, like this, are imperfectly alphabetic, as David's.

The metrical arrangement is not very marked. Some divide the psalm into five unequal strophes—vers. 1-7, vers. 8-10, vers. 11-15, vers. 16-21, and ver. 22; others see no divisions beyond those of the Hebrew verses, which are followed in our Authorized Bible.

Ver. 1.—Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul (comp. Ps. lxxxvi. 4; cxlii. 8). The Hebrew phrase does not mean a temporary raising of the heart to God, but a permanent setting of the affections on him

(see Dent. xxiv. 15; and comp. Ps. xxiv. 4).

Ver. 2.—O my God, I trust in thee (comp. Psa. vii. 1; xi. 1; xxxi. 1, 6, etc.). Let me not be ashamed; *i.e.* do not disappoint my trust, and thereby bring me to shame (comp. Job vi. 20). Let not mine enemies triumph over me. It does not appear whether the “enemies” intended are domestic or foreign foes. Either would triumph were David disappointed of a confident expectation.

Ver. 3.—Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed. The prayer passes from the particular to the universal. What David desires for himself he desires also for all the true servants of God—all who wait on him, look to him, seek for indications of his will (comp. Ps. cxxiii. 2). Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Let shame be the portion, not of thy servants, but of thy adversaries—of those who transgress (or rebel) without reasonable cause. Such persons deserve to be brought to shame.

Ver. 4.—Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. An echo of the prayer of Moses when his people were rebellious at Sinai (Exod. xxxiii. 13), reiterated by David in Ps. xxvii. 11, and perhaps again in Ps. lxxxvi. 11 (see also Ps. cxix. 33). Man is so wanting in spiritual understanding, so morally blind and ignorant, that, unless enlightened from on high, he cannot discern aright the “way of godliness;” he does not know at any given moment what God would have him to do. Hence it is the constant prayer of every religious man that God will “lighten his darkness;” “make his way plain before his face;” “show him the path that he should walk in;” enable him to see, if no more, at any rate the next step which it is his duty to take. The idea has been beautifully expressed by a modern poet—

“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom

Lead thou me on.

The night is dark, and I am far from home;

Lead thou me on.

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step enough for me.”

Ver. 5.—Lead me in thy truth, and teach me. “Thy truth” would seem to mean here “the true, right path”—the “way of godliness.” The prayer is that God will both teach this to the psalmist and “lead him in it”—cause him, *i.e.*, to walk in it, and never stray from it, so long as he lives. For thou art the God of my salvation. Thou art the God from whom alone I obtain salvation, and to whom alone, therefore, I am

bound to pray for everything on which salvation depends—as, for instance, light and guidance. On thee do I wait all the day. In prayer for these blessings, I wait on thee all the day long.

Ver. 6.—Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving-kindnesses. Past mercies form a ground for the expectation of future blessings. God’s character cannot change; his action as one time will always be consistent and harmonious with his action at another. If he has been kind and merciful to David in the past, David may count on his continuing the same in the future. For they have been ever of old. Not lately only, or to David only, have his mercies been shown, but through all past time, to all his servants, from of old.

Ver. 7.—Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions. Job thought that God counted against him the “iniquities of his youth” (Job xiii. 26); David, with greater faith and a deeper insight into the true character of God, can ask with confidence that his may not be reckoned against him. An earthly father does not remember them against his son. How much less will our heavenly Father! According to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness’ sake, O Lord! Still, put me not from thy mind. “Remember thou me” always—but in the light of thy tender mercy, with the rays of thy love streaming over me and hiding the deformities of my transgressions. Do this “for thy goodness’ sake,” *i.e.* because thou art essential Goodness, perfect Tenderness, perfect Love.

Ver. 8.—Good and upright is the Lord. A transition. From prayer the psalmist turns to reflection, and meditates awhile (vers. 8—10) on the character and ways of God. God is, indeed, “good,” as he has implied in the preceding verse—*i.e.* kind, tender, gentle, merciful; but he is also “upright” (רָצוֹן)—just, straight, strict, undeviating from the path of right. As Bishop Butler observes, “Divine goodness, with which, if I mistake not, we make very free in our speculations, may not be a bare single disposition to produce happiness, but a disposition to make the good, the faithful, the honest man happy” (‘Anal.’ i. 2, p. 41)—a disposition, *i.e.*, to be just as well as merciful—to distribute happiness by the canon of right. Therefore will he teach sinners in the way. He will not abandon sinners—this is his “goodness;” but will reclaim them, chasten them, make them to walk in his way—this is his uprightness.

Ver. 9.—The meek will he guide in judgment. It is only such sinners as are “meek”—*i.e.* humble, submissive, contrite, teachable—that God will take in hand and teach. The proud and perverse he will

leave to their own devices, but the meek he will guide in the paths of righteousness, and the meek will he teach his way.

Ver. 10.—All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. Mercy and truth will meet together (Ps. lxxxv. 10) in the case of those who, however they may have sinned, meekly submit themselves to God's guidance, and thenceforth keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Ver. 11.—For thy Name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity. The psalmist here resumes the attitude of prayer, which he had laid aside in ver. 8. The "sins of his youth," and his other "transgressions," which he had asked God to forget (ver. 7), rankle in his own memory, and force him to cry out again and again for pardon (see ver. 18; Pss. xxxiii. 5; xxxviii. 18; xxxix. 8; xli. 4, etc.). Here he beseeches God to pardon him "for his Name's sake," i.e. for the honour of his Name, that his mercy may be known far and wide, and his goodness cause all the world to praise him. He enforces his plea by the confession, For it (i.e. his iniquity) is great; so great, that his need of forgiveness is excessive; so great, that to forgive it will be truly Godlike; so great, that, unless forgiven, he must be lost. (For his "great sin," see 2 Sam. xi. 4—17.)

Ver. 12.—What man is he that feareth the Lord? Once more we have a series of reflections (vers. 12—15)—first, with respect to the God-fearing man. Every such man shall have favour shown him by God—him shall he (i.e. God) teach in the way that he shall choose. This is, of course, the right way—the way of God's commandments (Ps. cxix. 30, 173). God shall make his way plain to the God-fearing man.

Ver. 13.—His soul shall dwell at ease; rather, *his soul shall dwell in bliss*; i.e. he shall enjoy, while on earth, blessings of every kind. And his seed shall inherit the earth. His posterity after him shall be continued upon the earth, and shall prosper (comp. Ps. xxxvii. 11, 22, 29). There is a tendency in righteousness to "inherit the earth," only held in check by accidental and (it may be) temporary circumstances (see Butler's 'Analogy,' pt. i. ch. 3, pp. 78, 79).

Ver. 14.—The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. God favours those who fear him with secret and confidential communion (comp. Prov. iii. 32). He "comes unto them, and makes his abode with them" (John xiv. 23), and "teaches them" (John xiv. 26), and enlightens them, and leads them in his way, and learns them (ver. 5), and "seals their instruction" (Job xxxiii. 16). And he will show them his covenant; i.e. make them see the full force of it, since his "commandment is exceeding broad" (Ps. cxix. 96).

Ver. 15.—Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord. David is always looking to God (Ps. cxli. 8), waiting for him (Pss. xl. 1; lxii. 1, 5; lxix. 3, etc.), expecting his providences, anticipating his deliverances (Pss. iii. 7; v. 11; vii. 1; ix. 3, etc.). He is now, apparently, in some danger or difficulty, and in need of the Divine succour (comp. ver. 2). For he shall pluck my feet out of the net (comp. Ps. ix. 15; x. 10; xxxi. 5; xxxv. 7, etc.).

Ver. 16.—Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me. The approach of peril is regarded as a sign that God has "turned away his face." He is besought, therefore, to turn towards one who needs his aid. For I am desolate and afflicted (comp. vers. 17, 18). The affliction evidently comes from enemies, either foreign or domestic (vers. 2, 19); but its nature is not further indicated.

Vers. 17, 18.—The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. The affliction, of whatever kind it may have been, was regarded by David as a punishment sent on him for his sins. Of his sins he was at this time deeply conscious (vers. 7, 11) and deeply repentant. Probably they included his great sin (see the comment on ver. 11).

Ver. 19.—Consider mine enemies; for they are many (comp. Ps. iii. 7; v. 8; vi. 7, 10; vii. 1, 6; xvii. 9; xviii. 2, 17); and they hate me with cruel hatred. This would appear to point to domestic rather than foreign foes (see 2 Sam. xvi. 6—8).

Ver. 20.—O keep my soul, and deliver me (comp. Ps. vi. 4; xvii. 3; xxii. 20, etc.); let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee (see comment on ver. 2).

Ver. 21.—Let integrity and uprightness preserve me. Scarcely his own inherent integrity and uprightness, the want of which he has deplored when confessing that his iniquity is great (ver. 11). Rather an integrity and uprightness whereto he hopes to attain, by the grace of God, in days to come—an integrity and uprightness for which he "waits." For I wait on thee.

Ver. 22.—Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles. It is supposed by some that this verse was added during the "trouble" of the Captivity; and certainly its standing outside the alphabetical arrangement favours this view; but the similar irregularity at the close of Ps. xxxiv. rather makes against it. David evidently was not a slave to a mechanical arrangement; and any pious Israelite, at any age (therefore certainly David) might naturally append a prayer for his people to an outpouring of prayer for himself. Moreover, redemption is an idea familiar to David (Pss. xix. 14; xxvi. 11; xxxi. 5; xxxiv. 22).

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 4, 5.—“*Show me thy ways,*” etc. Prayer ought to be the most natural, as it is the noblest, form of speech. It would be if human nature were not off its balance, out of tune, morally crippled and disjointed. In extremity of peril or grief, the instinct of prayer often wakes up even in godless hearts—

“And lips say, ‘God be merciful!’  
That ne’er said, ‘God be praised!’”

But no godless lips would be surprised by danger or stung by pain into uttering such a prayer as this (Rom. viii. 26). The Book of Psalms abounds in prayers like this, or like vers. 6, 7, 11, which bear the stamp of the Holy Spirit’s teaching.

1. THESE WORDS TEACH OUR URGENT NEED OF GOD’S TEACHING. 1. *Concerning himself.* Nature is a revelation of God; a lesson-book stored with Divine meaning (Ps. xix. 1; Rom. i. 19, 20). His existence; his infinite wisdom and goodness in design, power in execution, ruling, upholding; unchanging faithfulness;—these are lessons we may read, if we have eyes, in this glorious universe. But nature has no message *to the individual*; no answer to this petition, “*Show me, teach me, lead me.*” Like a machine, it is guided by fixed laws; all is universal, calculable, relentless. The knowledge of God the heart needs is *personal*. Does he care for *me*, love *me*, invite *my* love? Have I sinned against him? and, if so, will he pardon? Will he listen if I speak, answer if I pray? Is that Arctic creed true, that he

“Sees with equal eye, as God of all,  
A hero perish or a sparrow fall?”

Or that blessed faith, that, while not a sparrow dies without the will of my heavenly Father, I count for more in his reckoning “than many sparrows”? 2. *Concerning ourselves.* Our life, duty, salvation. This is the teaching the psalmist asks for: “*thy ways;*” “*thy paths;*” “*Lead me in thy truth.*” The revelation of Scripture in a sense resembles that of nature. It is universal—for mankind (“all nations,” Matt. xxviii. 19; Luke xxiv. 47). The individual soul needs more than revelation—inspiration, the light and leading of the Holy Spirit.

II. THIS DIVINE TEACHING IS TO BE SOUGHT AND OBTAINED BY PRAYER. 1. Not as a substitute for Scripture. The inward light is not to supersede the written Word. God has given us there, *so far as words can convey it*, all the knowledge we need of himself, and of our duty, salvation, and destiny. 2. Nor yet to make us independent of human teaching. God does not bestow equal light on all Christians; but larger, deeper, clearer knowledge and wisdom to some, that they may impart to others. A mind too proud to learn from man is not in a fit state to be taught of God (1 Cor. xii. 8; Eph. iv. 11, 12). 3. But the capacity to apprehend Divine truth is from God. So is a right disposition of heart—faith, humility, sympathy, desire for holiness, love to God. The Bible is a sealed book to the understanding as long as the heart is closed against the gospel (Matt. xiii. 13—15; 1 John ii. 20, 27). The Spirit of God can teach us more in a single verse or sentence of a sermon, book, or letter, than we can gain without his teaching from whole volumes (Acts xvi. 14; 1 Thess. i. 5).

Remark: This truth is vital to Protestantism. Private judgment apart from Divine teaching would mean only the right to err. Daily experience shows the adequacy of the Scriptures, studied with earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit apart from human teaching, to convert the heart and bless and guide the life (John vi. 45). Without such prayer and Divine teaching the most learned biblical scholar may utterly fail to reach the hidden heart of Scripture.

Ver. 10.—*Glorious prospect of God’s dealings.* “All the paths,” etc. The spirit of this psalm is lowly but tranquil faith. Lowly, because of deep sense of sin (vers. 7, 11, 18) and experience of sorrow (vers. 2, 15—17); tranquil, because resting in God (vers. 1, 6, 8, 12). Like a flower rooted in a rock-cleft, that shivers with every breeze, but which you may tear to pieces but not uproot. This tenth verse contains an answer to the prayer of ver. 4. Starting from his own experience, the psalmist is

elevated to this glorious universal prospect of God's dealings. Consider (1) *the features here selected as characteristic of God's dealings*: "mercy and truth;" (2) *the assurance that these are never wanting in any instance*: "all the paths," etc.

I. THE FEATURES CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD'S DEALINGS. 1. "*Mercy*;" or, "loving-kindness," as the same Hebrew word is often rendered. (In Prov. xxxi. 26 and some other places, "kindness.") Although it is a useful general rule to employ one English word constantly to represent one Hebrew or Greek word, yet we could not afford to spare either of these words from our English Bible. Rules must not be pressed with pedantic strictness when they hurt in place of helping. Mercy, or loving-kindness, means goodness, and something more—a *personal* reference, inviting personal trust and thankfulness. You show goodness, large-hearted bounty, if you set up a public fountain where one is needed. But if you are journeying through the desert, and share your own scanty supply with a traveller ready to die of thirst, that is mercy, loving-kindness. When Israel dwelt in Goshen, God's goodness was shown in every ripening fruit and bending ear of corn. But perhaps the poor slaves forgot to praise the bountiful hand which fed their oppressors as richly. But when a table was spread for them morning by morning in the desert, and water gushed out of the rock, Israel learned the lesson they were brought there to learn, and praised the Lord, "for he is good; his mercy endureth for ever." So with God's greatest Gift: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John iii. 16; 1 John iii. 9, 10). But it is in the *personal* reception of this *universal* gift that "*whosoever believeth*" really learns its value. The sense of personal sin and unworthiness is indispensable to any adequate sense of God's mercy (comp. Gen. xxxii. 10). 2. *Truth* is the other great feature of God's character here set forth. These two are inseparable (Ps. lxxxv. 10). Neither apart from the other would furnish a gospel. God's mercy is the matter and motive of our faith; his truth its warrant and assurance (1 John v. 9—11). Among men one would rather trust a hard-hearted but incorruptibly truthful man, than one full of kind feeling but faithless. In God the two are as inseparable as the form and the colour which make to our view one image.

II. THESE GLORIOUS ATTRIBUTES OF GOD ARE CONSTANT, because he is unchangeable. They characterize all his dealings without exception, for God is always himself. "*All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.*" The psalmist adds, "unto such," etc. This twofold description of God's written Word corresponds with the two features we have been contemplating of the Divine character. "*His covenant,*" including all his promises (2 Cor. i. 20), is the expression of his *mercy*; "his testimonies," the utterance of his *truth*. Inseparable, like the glories of his nature. They also correspond with the twofold nature of *faith*—personal trust in God, and intelligent belief of Divine truth. Why this limitation—"unto such," etc.? Are not God's mercy and truth his free gift to all men—the charter from which none may bar them? Surely, *if they will receive them*. Truth is not truth to one who refuses to believe it—treats it as a fancy or a lie. A promise is no promise to one who rejects it (1 John v. 10). Such limitation lies in the nature of things, not in any arbitrary appointment. All are included who are willing to be included. None are shut out but those who shut themselves out (1 Tim. ii. 4—6). Does any child of God, sorely tried in mind, body, or estate, find it hard to hold fast this faith? Are you tempted to think *some* of God's ways unmerciful—that *some* of his promises fail? Rest assured this is your ignorance and weakness, not God's harshness or forgetfulness. This was Asaph's temptation, so pathetically recorded in Ps. lxxvii., so triumphantly overcome. When "the end of the Lord" comes to be known, every one who has "kept his covenant and his testimonies" shall find that "hope maketh not ashamed;" and shall confess, "He hath done all things well."

Ver. 11.—"*For thy Name's sake.*" The distinction between "natural religion" and "revealed religion," which makes a great figure in theological writings, finds no place in Scripture. Religion, as set forth in the Bible, is alike *natural* and *revealed*. All nature, human nature above the rest, bears witness to God. Ignorant of God, and separated from him either by ignorance or by want of natural affection, man is in an *unnatural* condition—out of harmony with his native surroundings. But just as it is not enough for vision that we have eyes, or for hearing that we have ears—we ne-

light and sound—so if religion is to have any reality and worth, it is not enough that our nature cries out for God; we must have the light of Divine truth, the voice of Divine teaching. This, in a word, is just what is meant by the phrase, so constantly employed in Scripture, “The Name of God.” It stands for all that God has made us capable of knowing of him, and all that he has actually made known of himself. This plea, “for thy Name’s sake,” is accordingly an appeal—first, to God’s manifestation (or revelation) of himself to men; and then, further, to his unchangeableness; and to his pledged word of promise.

**I. TO GOD’S MANIFESTATION OF HIMSELF.** In other words, to his recorded dealings with mankind. Our knowledge here, as elsewhere, rests on experience. When we speak of the Bible as “a revelation,” we express but half the truth. It is the *history of revelation*—the record of God’s progressive manifestation of himself to mankind. Speech is a powerful revealer of character. But words must be accompanied or backed up by deeds, if we are to trust them fully. Conduct reveals character as words cannot. And these, conduct and speech combined, cannot give full, intimate knowledge of any one without converse—personal communion and sympathy. Accordingly, this threefold cord is woven right through the Bible: (1) the revelation of God in his Word—law, instruction, promise, warning; (2) the revelation of God in his public dealings with nations and with individuals; and (3) the revelation of God by his Spirit in personal communion with the soul that seeks and loves him. It is little to say that, outside the Bible, in the religions and religious books of the heathen world, there is no such record, nor any semblance of it. There is nothing from which the very imagination of it could be drawn. To illustrate this threefold manifestation of God would be to go through the whole Bible. The light which dawns in Genesis shines brighter and brighter, till in the gospel we have the perfect day (1 John ii. 8). The words of *Jesus* tell all that words can express of God. His atoning death is everywhere in the New Testament declared to be the highest, deepest, most convincing revelation of both God’s love and righteousness—the two main features of his character. And personal communion with God cannot possibly go beyond our Saviour’s promise to his disciples (John xiv. 7, 10, 21), combined with the promise of the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit (vers. 16, 17).

**II. AN APPEAL TO GOD’S UNCHANGEABLENESS.** In other words, to what in men we call *consistency* and *stability* of character. This is all-important; yet in the case of men we must rest content with something short of complete certainty. The best of men may change or break down. We may say—

“He was a gentleman on whom I built  
An absolute trust.”

But temptation may find some weakness in him. Disappointment may sour his spirit. Some secret sin may undermine his virtue and piety. Circumstances, if they cannot conquer his will, may destroy his power to make good his word. But God cannot change (2 Tim. ii. 13; Mal. iii. 6). The revelation of God in Scripture is progressive but consistent. His *Name* is, as it were, spelled out letter by letter; but no letter once written is ever erased. In this sense, therefore, our knowledge of God has greater certainty than of our fellow-men. What is true of them to-day may not hold good this day year. But 1 John iv. 16 is true for all time, for all eternity. (These passages may be referred to: Exod. iii. 14, 15; xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 5; Prov. xviii. 10 and Ps. ix. 10; John v. 43; Matt. xviii. 20.)

**III. AN APPEAL TO GOD’S WORD OF PROMISE.** When an honest man puts his name to a promise or engagement, he is bound by a tie stronger than iron. God has condescended to give us this security. Perverse critics may call this “anthropomorphism;” it is what the Bible calls “the grace of God”—the settled plan and effort of the Father of spirits, by coming near to us to draw us home to him. Glimpses of this sublime idea, irrevocable Divine promise, may be found in heathen literature (‘Homer,’ e.g.)—a religion based on God’s promise will be found nowhere but in the Bible. Fear not, then, to use this plea, which God himself puts in thy mouth, “For thy Name’s sake!”

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Prayer: its warrant, petitions, and arguments.* It is thought by some that this prayer belongs to the Exile period; but by whomsoever it may have been penned, or at whatsoever age, matters little. There is nothing in it which depends on known historic incident<sup>1</sup> for its elucidation. And whoever desires to dive into the depths of its meaning will find the habit of waiting on God the best key to its words and phrases. No merely natural man can possibly unravel spiritual things, and he who is a stranger to prayer will get no help whatever in the understanding of this psalm from all the scholastic critics in the world. There are a few doubtful phrases, on which Perowne's notes will throw some light; but, speaking generally, this is one of the psalms on which Calvin and Matthew Henry will furnish adequately suggestive remarks. Reserving all dealing with specific texts in it for other writers in this Commentary, we propose to survey the psalm as a whole, though it may be that each heading thereon might furnish a theme for separate discourse. This prayer of an Old Testament saint suggests—

I. THAT WE KNOW ENOUGH OF GOD TO FURNISH US WITH A SOUND BASIS FOR PRAYER. Interspersed among the several petitions there are here several statements of exquisite beauty (cf. vers. 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 3, 13). These may be thus set forth: 1. God is good and upright; therefore will he teach and guide those who seek him. Good, so that he delights to do it; upright, so that he will be true to his promise. 2. This guidance he vouchsafes to the meek (ver. 9). Taken in a physical sense, the word translated "meek" is equivalent to "afflicted;" in a moral sense its meaning is as given here (cf. Jas. i. 21; iv. 6; Matt. xi. 25). 3. To loyal souls all his ways are mercy and truth (ver. 10); hence he cannot shut his ear to their prayer (see also ver. 12). "Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose;" Luther, "Er wird ihn unterweisen den besten Weg." 4. He will give such souls a rest and refuge in himself (ver. 13). "His soul shall lodge in goodness" (Hebrew; cf. Ps. xci. 1, Hebrew). 5. To such God will open up the heavenly secrets of his covenant love. A glorious anticipation, by spiritual intuition, in Old Testament times, of John xv. 15. 6. He will never put to shame those that wait on him (ver. 3, Revised Version; see Perowne's note thereon). As followers of our Lord Jesus, we may add to all this the amazing statement, "The Father seeketh such to worship him." God is not only willing to receive their worship, but he eagerly desires it (John iv. 23).

II. THAT PRAYER IS THE HIGHEST EFFORT OF MAN. It is described in the first verse as "lifting up the soul to God" (cf. Pss. cxxi. 1; cxliii. 8). This the psalmist did (1) in the morning (Ps. v. 3); (2) at noon and at evening (Ps. iv. 17); (3) seven times a day (Ps. cxix. 164); (4) all the day (Ps. xxv. 5); (5) perpetually (Ps. xxv. 15). The psalmist prayed not only when trouble came, but always. His heart spontaneously went up ever to God, as to the Friend without whose smile he could not live, and without whose protection he dared not move. Note: For elevation of life our spirits must be ever looking above and beyond themselves. An upward look will uplift character; the downward look will degrade.

III. THAT INWARD CONFLICTS AND OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES OFTEN GIVE SPECIAL INTENSITY TO PRAYER. Glancing over the varied forms of expression which indicate the psalmist's mental state and his surroundings, we shall see this: 1. The remembrance of past sins troubles him. Oh that the young would beware of sin! Long, long after it is forgiven by God, it will poison and worry the memory (ver. 7). So much so, that only as the sinning one flings himself on *mercy*, can he have any rest at all. 2. The psalmist is desolate, afflicted (ver. 16), troubled in heart (ver. 17), in a net (ver. 15), surrounded with bitter enemies (ver. 19). What a burden of care and grief he has to roll over upon God! Note: It is an infinite mercy to be permitted to tell God exactly what we feel, and all that we feel, knowing that we shall never be

<sup>1</sup> The carefully prepared work of the Rev. A. R. Fausset, M.A., entitled, "HOMÆ PSALMICÆ," is worthy of a careful study. He regards this psalm as "David's prayer for deliverance from enemies like Absalom and Shimei, on the ground of God's covenant of grace to the meek penitent" (see remarks of great interest on this psalm in lectures ii., iv., vi., and xiv.).



misunderstood, but that we shall be laying open all our griefs only before infinite goodness and mercy.

IV. THE SPECIFIC PETITIONS IN PRAYER MAY BE VARIED AS OUR NEED. The petitions specified in this psalm are mainly for himself, but not exclusively. Those for himself are such as any child of God may present at any time. The special colouring given to each must need be the reflection of hues of his own, "fresh borrowed from the heart." The psalmist's petitions for himself may be grouped under eight heads. 1. That God would not put him to shame before his enemies (ver. 2). 2. He prays for light (ver. 4). 3. For teaching in the way in which he should go (vers. 4, 5). 4. That he may have experience in God's faithfulness (ver. 5; see notes, 'Variorum Bible'). 5. For loving-kindness and mercy (ver. 6). 6. For forgiveness (ver. 11). 7. For Divine guardianship (ver. 20). 8. For a gracious, compassionate look (ver. 18). 9. That amidst all temptations to wander from the way, he may be kept in integrity and uprightness (vers. 21, 22). But the pleading one cannot close without one prayer for the Church of God (ver. 22; cf. Ps. li. 18, 19). A noble, pious, public spirit existed in the Old Testament saints. Such a one as the writer of this psalm cannot forget his people at a throne of grace. Well would it be if such earnest public spirit were possessed by Christian people everywhere, so that, as priests unto God, they would never enter the holy of holies save with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel graven on their breast.

V. THE PRAYING ONE MAY USE MANIFOLD ARGUMENTS IN PLEADING WITH HIS GOD. There is a blending of simplicity, boldness, and grandeur in the pleas of this prayer. 1. "I trust in thee" (ver. 2). When there is trust on one side, we may be sure it is reciprocated by love and pity on God's side. 2. "Thou art the God of my salvation" (ver. 5). Thou hast undertaken to deliver me, and thou wilt be true to thine own promises. God loves to be reminded of his promises. He has never said in vain to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me." 3. "Remember thy tender mercies," etc. (ver. 6). David's past experience of God's mercy was a pledge that God would not forget him. 4. "For thy Name's sake" (ver. 11). Gracious answers to his people's prayer magnify God's Name; they reveal his grace and love. And the psalmist, in holy daring, pleads with God to magnify his own Name in hearing him. Yea, more; a more startling argument still is used. 5. "For it [mine iniquity] is great" (ver. 11)! Who but those who know how God delights to forgive, and even to multiply pardons, could ever venture to plead for forgiveness *because their sin was so great*? Yet surely the meaning is, "Lord, though my sin is great, the greater will thy mercy be, and the more lustroously thy pardoning love will shine forth on the background of my guilt!" Such prayers and such pleadings as these are not learnt in a day nor in a year. They can come only from one whose eyes are *ever* towards the Lord.

VI. SUCH TRUSTING AND PRAYING ONES WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME. (Ver. 3, Revised Version.) They never have been. They never will be.<sup>1</sup> They cannot be. The revealed character and attributes of God assure us of this. The opening up of the new and living way to God, which our great High Priest has consecrated for ever for our use, ensures it. The blood of Christ seals the same; it is the "blood of the everlasting covenant." The love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost is another pledge of the efficacy of prayer. Yea, the immutability of God himself confirms this; not only that prayer *will* avail, but also that without prayer we have no right to expect the blessings we need. Our Lord has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Thus he teaches the Divine rule for us. If, then, it is God's will to give us blessing when we ask, it is useless for us to think to change the mind of God, and to expect the blessing without asking for it.—C.

Vers. 1—7.—*Onward and upward.* There are different stages in the life of godliness. Hence experiences vary. Some are but babes, others are strong men. Some have only started in the race, others are nearing the goal. Some have only put on their armour, while others have borne themselves bravely in many a fight and are waiting the crown. Some have only entered by the wicket-gate, while others have gone through most of their pilgrimage; they have climbed the Hill Difficulty, have

<sup>1</sup> For innumerable instances of direct answers to prayer in times of extreme difficulty and peril, see 'Autobiography of J. G. Paton, Missionary to the New Hebrides,' 1st part.

passed safely through the Valley of Humiliation and Vanity Fair; have stood on the Delectable Mountains, and are now resting in the pleasant Land of Beulah, till called home to the heavenly city. The psalmist here speaks like a man of matured wisdom and piety. His voice is not that of one beginning the spiritual life, but rather of one who, like "Paul the aged," has seen many days, and has gathered large stores of experience. We find here—

**I. HOLY ASPIRATION.** The psalmist was a man of prayer. His yearnings were ever towards God. There was much to weigh him down; but against all obstacles he pressed upward and onward. "Nearer my God, nearer to thee," was his cry.

**II. APPROPRIATING FAITH.** There is not only faith in God as God, but the higher and nobler faith of appropriation. "My God." This implied knowledge and personal trust. But while the confession is boldly made, it is accompanied by true lowliness of heart. The sense of weakness; the danger of yielding to false shame; the possibility of being overborne, as others had been, by the might and craftiness of the foe,—constrain the soul to cling the more closely to God.

**III. LOVING SELF-SURRENDER.** Here is the spirit of the learner (ver. 4), humble and trustful, willing to be led and to be taught of God. It is what we find in Paul, who cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and then, in obedience to the heavenly vision, was content to sit at the feet of the humble Ananias of Damascus. We must feel ourselves simply and unreservedly in the hands of God, if we are to learn aright. If we trust to our own wisdom, we shall go astray, if we take counsel of men, we are in danger of being led into by-paths and devious ways; but if we commit ourselves to God, he will guide us into all the truth, and lead us in the way everlasting.

**IV. LOYAL SERVICE.** "Waiting" does not imply inaction. It is not resting in ease, or folding the hands in idleness, or holding back from effort, as if we could do nothing. Rather it implies faith and work (Ps. cxiii. 2). We see also that there is no limit or stop to the service. It is not for an hour, but "all the day." So it was with our blessed Lord (John xi. 9); so it should be with us.

**V. QUICKENING MEMORIES.** The mercies of the past are pledges of mercies in the future (ver. 6). "Of old" reaches far back. Imagination looks to the beginnings when God first showed mercy to sinful man; while memory recalls the special tokens and proofs of Divine kindness to ourselves. God's mercies always flow in the channel of his righteousness.

**VI. INSPIRING HOPES.** Memory has its pains as well as its pleasures. As the psalmist looks back, the "sins of his youth" come up before him. But God is merciful. Other sins also rise in dread array; not only errors, but "transgressions," wherein he had wilfully offended. Again the only refuge is in God. The worse our case, the greater our need of mercy. God's Name inspires hope, and assures us not only of forgiveness, but of grace to sanctify and sustain our souls till the conflict closes in victory, and our prayers end in praise.—W. F.

Ver. 7.—*Sins of youth.* "Remember not the sins of my youth." This prayer implies—

**I. PAINFUL MEMORIES.** Brought up under the eye of God, our life should have been pure. It is our shame that it has been otherwise. Looking back, we are distressed at the remembrance of our follies and offences. Oh that we had hearkened unto God! then it might have been with us as with the holy Child Jesus—

"A son that never did amiss,  
That never sham'd his mother's kiss,  
Nor cross'd her fondest prayer."

**II. DEEPENING SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY.** Life is one whole. Amidst all changes personal identity remains. The present is linked to the past. We are answerable, not only for what we do to-day, but for what we have done in our earliest days. The sins of our youth are "ours." They form part of our burden, and press upon us the more heavily because of the added sins of riper years.

**III. GROWING CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE EVIL OF SIN.** Once, perhaps, we thought lightly of the sins of youth. They were but errors and faults common to all—the inevitable result of ignorance and inexperience at the worst. We were only sowing

our wild oats. But now we look at things differently. We have seen not only the seed, but the fruit (Rom. vi. 21). We have, besides, gained insight, and our consciences have become more tender from living near to God. We judge, therefore, not only with better evidence, but **by** a higher standard.

IV. MISERABLE SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS. We see and deplore the evil, but cannot remedy it. We are like one standing by a house on fire. There was a time when we could have stopped the flame, but it is now too late. Perhaps some brother or sister has erred through our fault. If counsel could avail, we would give it. If tears and repentance on our part could atone, they would not be wanting. But no; it is too late; our only help is in God.

V. TERRIBLE FOREBODINGS. Think how distressing it must be to see the bad results of our sins in others. Some have died who had been hurt by us; others are living now in sin, whom we had helped to lead astray. Our own sins are reflected in the sins of others. Of Jeroboam it is said, "Who sinned, and made Israel to sin." Alas! he has had many followers. The sins of youth may become the groans of age (Job xiii. 26).

VI. FAITH IN THE MERCY AND POWER OF GOD. In our distress we turn to God. We cannot hope that he will forget; but he can forgive. We must not think that he will alter his law—that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" but he is able to change our minds and hearts, so that we shall accept his law as holy and just and good; and then what we have regarded as stern rebuke will be turned into loving discipline, and our severest chastisements will end in our highest good. What a blessed change it makes, when into the confusions and the miseries and the sorrows of this world we bring the light and the love of God! We make our confession to him, and find peace. We cast our burden upon him, and are sustained.—W. F.

Vers. 8—14.—Here we may learn something as to *God's revelation to man*. I. That God's revelation **MUST BE IN HARMONY WITH HIS CHARACTER**. With God there can be no contradiction. What he does shows what he is. His words and his works agree. If we were created in the image of God, then we reasonably infer that, when God makes a special revelation to us, it will be in accord with our moral nature. This is what gives the gospel its preciousness and its power. "God was in Christ."

II. That God's revelation is **MADE TO THE SPIRITUALLY SUSCEPTIBLE**. (Vers. 8, 9.) In this there is nothing arbitrary or strange. It must be so, from the very nature of things. As Coleridge sings—

"O lady, we receive but what we give,  
And in our lives alone does nature live."

And a greater authority has said, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). "To many among us neither heaven nor earth has any revelation till some personality touches ours with a peculiar influence, subduing them into receptiveness."

III. That God's revelation **CAN ONLY BE RECEIVED IN ITS FULLNESS BY THE OBEDIENT**. (Vers. 10—14.) The question is asked, "Who is the man that feareth the Lord?" and this is as good as saying, "Find me such a man, and I will tell you how it will fare with him. God will reveal himself to him otherwise than he does to the world. Between them there is sympathy and sweet accord." God opens his mind to those who love him. He lets them into his secrets. They are in the way of light, and evermore, as they advance, the light shines on them more fully. The word of the psalmist is confirmed and completed in the teaching of our Lord (John xv. 7—15). This has been the experience of God's people in all ages. Abraham in his tent (Gen. xviii. 17), David with his flocks, Daniel in the king's palace, the apostle in the dungeon at Philippi,—all have felt alike that God reveals himself to those who truly serve him.—W. F.

Vers. 15—22.—There are *three stages* depicted here *in the godly man's life*. I. **THE GODLY MAN IN FEAR**. Trouble comes. Perhaps there has been over-confidence, or unwatchfulness, or entanglement with the things of the world. Our feet are caught in the net. Enemies scoff. We are harassed and perplexed. Our efforts to relieve

ourselves may make things worse. It is hard to be alone when one falleth; but it is harder when troubles increase till they are heavier than can be borne, and there seems no eye to pity nor arm to bring deliverance.

II. **THE GODLY MAN CRYING FOR RESCUE.** (Vers. 16—22.) Prayer is a sure resource in trouble. To whom but God can we lay bare our hearts? and who is there but God that can bring help when the help of man falleth? He loves us; therefore we can cry to him with hope. We can weary him with our sins, but never with our prayers. The very greatness of our need is our best plea for God's doing great things for us. Our cause is his care; our relief is his pleasure; our salvation is his glory.

III. **THE GODLY MAN REJOICING FOR DELIVERANCE.** (Vers. 20—22.) The prayer implies the performance. The hope which God begets he will never betray. The consciousness of integrity, of simple faith and willingness to submit to God's guidance, without byways or secret ways, gives the assurance that God will save. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me," is the promise. Having this confidence, we can rejoice, not only in deliverance for ourselves, but in like deliverances for others, whose needs are like ours. As it was in the past, so shall it be to the end. From many a land, and in many a tongue, the cry will go up, "The troubles of my heart are enlarged." But let us be of good cheer. Christ lives. He has not only overcome the world, but he promises the victory to his people also. He has not only ascended to heaven, but he has engaged to bring his people there also, "where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying" (John xiv. 3; Rev. xxi. 4).—W. F.

Vers. 1—7.—*Trust in God.* "Belongs probably to the time of the Exile. Its prevailing thought is that God is the Teacher of the afflicted and the Guide of the erring; and this is constantly repeated, either in the way of statement or of prayer." The first seven verses contain three things.

I. **ASPIRING TRUST IN GOD.** (Vers. 1—3.) Seeking, drawn towards, lifting himself up towards God, waiting upon him,—all signify the earnest, confident trust in God, which is the highest act of the soul towards the great Invisible Being. This is associated with obedience; for transgressors will be confounded; they have no ground for expecting salvation, and will be made ashamed.

II. **EARNEST PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE.** (Vers. 4, 5.) "*Show me thy ways;*" "*Teach me thy paths;*" "*Lead me in thy truth.*" (1) Help me to understand thy providence or government, for I am often perplexed by it. (2) Teach me the paths in which thou wouldst have me walk. (3) Let me live in the experience of thy faithfulness. (1) Enlighten my thoughts, and give me the power to interpret thy ways of acting. (2) Control my conduct, move me to duty, and give me an obedient heart. (3) Help me to trust in the truth of thy Word and thy ways. *For* thou art saving me, and I am waiting on thee to this end.

III. **A CRY FOR GOD'S UNCHANGEABLE MERCY.** (Vers. 6, 7.) God's mercy is called "tender mercy" and "loving-kindness," to indicate its qualities and its source. And it is everlasting and unchangeable, because God cannot be unlike himself; he cannot change his nature nor his conduct. The cry here is for mercy upon the sins of his youth. 1. *The sins of youth are the sins of impulse, of inconsideration.* Not deliberate sins, but better remembered than sins of later life. 2. *The sins of inexperience and ignorance.* We know not what we do—like Christ's murderers—when we transgress. The plea is, "According to thy loving-kindness," etc. For the sake of thy goodness, because thou art love, because thou art good, do these favours for me. This is the everlasting plea with God that sinners must use; not that God can be made propitious towards us, but that he *is* propitious, *has* been, and *will* always remain so, "not willing that any should perish."—S.

Vers. 8—14.—*The supreme importance of Divine interposition.* The main subject of these verses is the Divine teaching, help, and guidance. Men are ignorant and erring, and the supreme importance of Divine interposition is here recognized and unfolded.

I. **THE PERSONS WHOM GOD ENLIGHTENS AND HELPS.** 1. *He instructs sinners.* Shows them the right way, and helps them to walk in it. He helps his people, though they are sinners, and in spite of it (ver. 8). The *ground* of this conduct is given—

because he is good and righteous, or upright. It becomes his nature to act thus. 2. *He leads the lowly or meek*; or those who are lowly because of oppression. He leads them *in righteousness*; i.e. he gives to them, who do not oppose might with might, justice against their oppressors. The *right* is sure to triumph in the end. 3. *He reveals himself to his faithful, obedient people.* (Ver. 10.) Shows to them that all his ways are gracious and faithful. Human faithfulness discovers Divine faithfulness, and is the organ through which it is revealed. 4. *He teaches them that fear him.* (Vers. 12—14.) Only those who fear God are anxious to know the right path; and even God can teach only those who are anxious to find the way of life.

II. THE BENEFIT AND THE BLESSING OF DIVINE GUIDANCE. 1. *He who feels guided by God is emboldened to cry for pardon for his sins.* His argument for pardon is twofold. "For thy Name's sake," etc.; "For mine iniquity is great," etc. I shall sink under it unless it be pardoned. 2. *He shall know how to choose wisely his own way.* (Ver. 12.) Acquires an inherent, constant wisdom, as the fruit of Divine teaching, and is raised above the power of changing human opinion. 3. *He shall enjoy enduring prosperity* (ver. 13), and his seed *by way of natural consequence.* The path of righteousness is the only "way everlasting." 4. *Only those who live and walk with God know his will.* (Ver. 14.) "The secret of the Lord" is hidden from the eyes and hearts of the disobedient. God himself is hidden; but the secret of his love is further off still from their perceptions. God's "covenant" with man through Christ surpasses in glory all his former covenants with man.—S.

Vers. 15—22.—*The troubles of the righteous.* The two previous sections of the psalm express trust in the Divine help and prayer for guidance. From the fifteenth verse we see the reasons of the urgency of his prayer. The friends and the enemies of God are in conflict in this world, and the psalmist is suffering at the hands of the wicked, and needs the interposition of God. *The troubles of the righteous.*

I. EVIL COUNSELS ARE SET IN MOTION AGAINST HIM. (Ver. 15.) "A net is laid for his feet." This may mean physical or moral danger, putting in peril his life or his character, aiming either at his death or drawing him into evil courses. Evil men rejoice if they can prevail upon a good man to abandon his principles or sacrifice his character. His danger is not from open temptation, but from artful sophistries, making the worse appear the better reason; plots against his honour.

II. HE IS IN SPECIAL NEED OF DIVINE SYMPATHY. (Ver. 16.) On account of his loneliness in his trouble—*desolate*. He is isolated from sympathy and companions, and cast upon God's companionship. We are often thus tried if we are faithful to God and our work—as Christ was, and our consolation was his, "I am not alone; for the Father is with me."

III. HE HAD MANY INWARD AS WELL AS OUTWARD TROUBLES. (Vers. 17, 18.) He suffered *pain* and *affliction*, and an intense consciousness of *sinfulness*. Either of these experiences, separately, is hard enough to bear; but when both have to be endured at the same time, there is no greater misery. We can but cry and pray as the psalmist did.

IV. HE DREADED THAT THE ACTIVE HATRED OF HIS MANY ENEMIES WOULD BRING HIM TO OPEN SHAME. (Vers. 19, 20.) He was afraid that the Divine cause, as represented in his person, might appear, in some way, to be worsted; and if so, he would feel the deepest humiliation. "Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee." If God disappointed his hope, his enemies would pour derision on his trust in God, and that would be a deep calamity, if men proclaimed that faith in God was a vain thing. But God is not unfaithful; it is we who are faithless, and expose ourselves to shame.

V. HE CONCLUDES WITH A PRAYER FOR INTEGRITY AND UPRIGHTNESS AS HIS DEFENCE. (Ver. 21.) He desires to have these as his guardians, because his way is perilous from inward and outward foes. The effect of deep trouble is sometimes to make us reckless, and to forfeit steadfast perseverance; to unstring and relax our moral nature. And sometimes it braces us up to the highest aim and the strongest effort, as here, to realize our trust in God and to seek for the whole armour of righteousness, that "we may withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand." The twenty-second verse was added when this psalm came to be used in public worship.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM XXVI.

DAVID, about to sacrifice at God's altar, protests his integrity, but still prays for God's protection (ver. 9) and for his redeeming mercy (ver. 11). The psalm has all the notes of David's style, is full of his thoughts and imagery, and is allowed to be his by almost all critics. It must belong to the time following the removal of the ark to Mount Zion, and preceding the committal of the great offence.

Ver. 1.—Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity. It seems to Christians a bold act to call on God for judgment, but the saints of the earlier dispensation, having, perhaps, a less keen sense of human imperfection, were wont to do so. It is Job's cry from his first utterance until his "words are ended;" and here we find David taking it up and re-echoing it. Man longs to hear the sentence of acquittal from the great Judge. Like Job, David asserts his "integrity," and in the same qualified sense. He is sincere in his endeavours to do right. Yet still he needs mercy and redemption (see ver. 11). I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide. (comp. Psa. xviii. 36; xxxvii. 31). David is confident of his past; for the future he trusts in God to uphold his steps, and save him from slips and falls.

Ver. 2.—Examine me, O Lord, and prove me. He desires to be examined and proved—tested, as a metal is tested (comp. Ps. xvii. 3)—that his sincerity may fully appear. Try my reins and my heart; i.e. my emotional and my intellectual natures.

Ver. 3.—For thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes. The psalmist now enters upon an enumeration of the points of conduct on which his confidence in his integrity rests. They are six—three positive and three negative. First of all, he keeps God's loving-kindness, or mercy (חַסֵּד), ever before his eyes—reflects on it, meditates on it, presents it to his thought—contitionally. And I have walked in thy truth. Secondly, he walks—he has always walked—in God's truth. God's Law is the truth (Ps. cxix. 42); and walking in God's truth is walking in the Law which he has given to men; as Hitzig, Maurer, and others have seen. Hengstenberg's exposition, "I have constantly thought upon thy faithfulness," cannot be admitted.

Ver. 4.—I have not sat with vain persons. Thirdly, he has not sat with vain persons;

literally, *with men of vanity*; i.e. he has not consorted (Ps. i. 1) with light and frivolous persons—those whose hearts are set upon vain and worthless things (see Ps. xxiv. 4, and the comment). Neither will I go in with dissemblers. Nor will he go in with (nor has he, we may conclude, gone in with) dissemblers, i.e. hypocrites. He has neither thrown in his lot with the light, vain persons who make no pretence to religion, nor with the pretenders, who "have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii. 5).

Ver. 5.—I have hated the congregation of evil-doers. Fifthly, he has hated, and hates, with a holy and strong abhorrence (comp. Ps. cxxxix. 22), the congregation of evil-doers—the gatherings and assemblies of those who meet only for wicked purposes—to sin themselves, and to draw others into like evil courses. This is a positive trait of a very marked character, and goes far beyond the explanation which has been given of it: "I take no part in assemblies for the ruin of others" (Hengstenberg). Sixthly and lastly, he will not sit with the wicked. This only goes beyond the declarations in ver. 4 by extending to all wicked persons of every kind the avoidance there limited to "vain persons," and "dissemblers." The spirit is that indicated by Jacob in Gen. xlix. 6; by St. Paul, in 1 Cor. v. 9—11 and Eph. v. 7, 11; and by St. John, on the celebrated occasion when he avoided contact with Cerinthus (Iren., iii. 3, § 4).

Ver. 6.—I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord. This seems to be the key-note of the psalm. If not a necessary, it is at any rate a probable, exegesis, that David composed this psalm on an occasion when he was about to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God for some mercy recently vouchsafed him (ver. 7). Before offering, he feels the necessity of doing *spiritually* that which the priest who officiated would have to do *ceremonially* (Exod. xxx. 17—21)—to "wash his hands in innocency, and so to go to God's altar." His self-justification from ver. 1 to ver. 5 has had for its object to clear him from guilt.

Ver. 7.—That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving; rather, *to sound forth the voice of thanksgiving* (Kay); or, *to make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard* (Revised Version). And tell of all thy wondrous works; or, *recount them, enumerate them*.

Ver. 8.—Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house; i.e. "the *home* that thy house affords me." It has been my delight to

remain there, to pass long hours there, as it were to dwell there (comp. Ps. xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4; lxiii. 2). And the place where thine honour dwelleth; literally, *the place of the tabernacling of thy glory*—the place where thy glory—the *Shechinah*—is enshrined and abides.

Ver. 9.—Gather not my soul with sinners. Unite me not in one doom with open sinners—those with whom I have always refused to consort (vers. 4, 5)—whose congregation I have “hated.” “That the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. xviii. 25). Nor my life with bloody men. Bloody men—literally, *men of bloods*—are the worst of wicked men, cut-throats, assassins, murderers. At any rate, put me not on a par with them. Little, probably, did the psalmist think at this time how soon he was to become, practically, a murderer, and to “slay Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the children of Ammon” (2 Sam. xii. 9).

Ver. 10.—In whose hands is mischief; *i.e.* who are always occupied with some mischief or other—always engaged in carrying out wicked devices (see Prov. xii. 2; xiv. 17). And their right hand is full of bribes. Which they have taken to condemn the innocent

(comp. Ps. xv. 5; Isa. i. 23; Jer. xxii. 17; Ezek. xxii. 12; Hos. iv. 10; Micah iii. 11, etc.).

Ver. 11.—But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity; *i.e.* I will continue to walk as I have walked hitherto (see ver. 1)—I will be “integer vitæ scelerisque purus”—a brave and good resolve. Had he but kept to it! Redeem me, and be merciful unto me (compare the comment on ver. 1). Though hitherto he has walked innocently, and is resolved still to continue to walk innocently; he nevertheless feels that he has need of redeeming mercy. Though he “knows nothing by himself, yet he is not thereby justified” (1 Cor. iv. 4). Many, doubtless, are his “secret sins,” which God has “set in the light of his countenance” (Ps. xc. 8).

Ver. 12.—My foot standeth in an even place; or, *on level ground*—where there is nothing to cause me to stumble (comp. Ps. xxvii. 11). In the congregations will I bless the Lord; *i.e.* in the assemblies of the people for public worship. David constantly acknowledges this duty (Ps. xxii. 22, 25; xxvii. 6; xxxv. 18; xl. 9, 10; lxviii. 26, etc.). Indeed, it is the general idea that underlies all his psalms of praise, since they were composed to be recited in the congregation.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*Faith's bold request.* “Examine me,” etc. A very bold prayer. The image is taken from the testing and purifying of gold in the furnace, to which the word rendered “try” properly applies. It is as if the gold begged to be cast into the furnace (Job xxiii. 10). Who can say, if this prayer is to be answered, how hot the furnace may need to be? But “we have boldness” (Eph. iii. 12). There are cases in which this bold prayer may be justifiable, wise, needful. It includes—

I. A RECOGNITION OF GOD'S ALL-SEARCHING KNOWLEDGE. (Ps. cxxxix. 1; Jer. xvii. 10; Rev. ii. 23.) God's free, forgiving mercy is represented under the image of his *forgetting* our sins (Heb. viii. 12, etc.). This must not make us lose sight of the fact of his actual knowledge (Heb. iv. 13). If men see faults where God does not, it is their blindness, not their keenness.

II. THE APPEAL OF CONSCIOUS INTEGRITY, from men's slander or misjudgment to the righteous judgment of God. Such an appeal is perfectly consistent with true humility and a deep sense of sinfulness before God (cf. Acts xxiii. 1; xxiv. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 3—5 with 1 Tim. i. 12—15). At the same time, we can hardly suppose David could have composed this psalm after his great and shameful fall. Regarded apart from that dark passage of his life, we see a man, with the faults, it is true, of an ardent, passionate temperament, but conscious of honest purpose, high sense of duty, fervent love to God, and true desire to rule God's people well; yet we must bear in mind (what Bishop Perowne has well expressed) that “the full depth and iniquity of sin was not disclosed to the saints of the Old Testament. Sin could only appear to be sin in all its blackness and malignity when it was brought into the full light of the cross of Christ. And it is only as any man grasps that cross that he can bear to look into the pollution which cleaves to his nature” (Perowne, *ad loc.*).

III. PRAYER AGAINST SELF-DECEPTION. An appeal not only from the unfair judgments of men, but from our own ignorance of ourselves (Ps. xix. 12; cxxxix. 23, 24). Peter's boastful, self-ignorant self-confidence was the immediate forerunner of his fall (Matt. xxvi. 33, 35).

**IV. SUBMISSION TO GOD'S METHODS OF TRIAL.** These may be severe, the faithful severity of love. It needs the courage of faith—undoubting confidence in God's love—to enable us to offer this prayer with full thought of all it may mean in our case. Christ sits as a Refiner (Mal. iii. 2, 3). God searches by his Word (Heb. iv. 12), by his Spirit (John xv. 8), by the dealings of his providence and outward trials (1 Pet. i. 6, 7), even by the permitted temptations of the evil one (Luke xxii. 31, 32).

Thus a prayer which would be the height of rash presumption, offered in the spirit of self-righteous self-confidence, becomes a wise, safe, and fitting prayer, offered in the spirit of humble, childlike faith.

**Ver. 10.—*The sin of bribery.*** "Their right hand is full of bribes." Christians have undeniably a far higher standard of morality supplied by the gospel than was possible in earlier times under any other dispensation. How, then, is this paradox to be solved—that we find Old Testament saints trying themselves by severer tests, and aiming at a higher level both of morality and of devotion than multitudes of professed Christians attempt to reach or even deem attainable? The practice of *bribery* has often attained, in nominally Christian commonwealths, such proportions as to endanger public welfare and honour, and this with the connivance of many religious people; yet it is here condemned as worthy to be classed with the worst crimes, utterly inconsistent with "innocency" and "integrity" (vers. 6, 11; cf. Isa. xxxv. 15). Subject—*The sin of bribery, and the duty of Christians to oppose it to the utmost of their power.*

**I. BRIBERY MEANS A BARGAIN TO BETRAY A SOLEMN PUBLIC TRUST.** The constitution bestows the vote, not for the voter's private benefit, but that fit men may be chosen to office; it is a trust for the community. Suppose a prime minister were to sell the offices at his disposal, or a jury to sell their verdict, or a judge his sentence, would not the world cry shame? The *scale* is different, but the *principle* is the same.

**II. BRIBERY POWERFULLY CORRUPTS PUBLIC MORALITY AND NATIONAL CHARACTER.** For patriotism and public spirit it substitutes selfishness; for honest, independent conviction, base disregard of principle. It destroys the sense of public honour; it degrades office by making the qualification, not fitness, but pelf; it puts the making of laws and ordering of justice in the hands of men who have begun by breaking the law and insulting justice; it degrades alike the giver and the receiver.

**III. BRIBERY TENDS TO PRODUCE CORRUPT GOVERNMENT AND DISHONEST LEGISLATION.** It is true a man's conscience may allow him to give a bribe, yet forbid him to take one; but how long would this inconsistency last if the innocency of *giving* bribes were generally allowed? If an elector may sell his vote, why not a member of parliament or of council? What right would an elector have to complain if his representative were to say, "I have bought my seat, and paid for it, and have a right to make a profit out of it"?

A Christian's reputation should be dear to him, not for his own sake alone, but for his Lord's, for the gospel's and the Church's sake. He should be able to say, with St. Paul, Acts xxiv. 16 (cf. 1 Tim. v. 22; Phil. iv. 8). Some excellent Christians, it is true, would limit "whatsoever things," etc., to the concerns of private life. But by what right? A Christian, they say, is a citizen of the heavenly city, and has no concern with earthly politics. But he cannot help having concern. He is also a citizen of his earthly country, whether he will or no, and has all the privileges of a citizen and the benefits of the commonwealth. Privilege and benefit mean duty and responsibility. Love to our neighbour and care for the poor do not surely cease to be Christian duties when the welfare of a whole nation, and of other nations, or the care of the poor at home and the enslaved and oppressed in other lands, call for the strong arm of law and national government.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—12.—*Assailed integrity's final appeal.***<sup>1</sup> It seems evident that this psalm was written by some Old Testament saint who was surrounded by ungodly men, by

<sup>1</sup> This psalm may be compared with the seventh and seventeenth (see homilies thereon). Canon Cheyne says (*Expositor*, January, 1890), in reference to this and the twenty-eighth



whom he was assailed, reproached, and slandered. From them he appeals to God. By the heading of the psalm we are pointed to David as the author. And there is no reason for questioning that. Mr. Fausset, in his most suggestive book, 'Horæ Psalmicæ,' working along the line of "undesigned coincidences," remarks, "Another feature of undesigned coincidence is the unmistakable identity of David's character, as he reveals it in the Psalms, and as the independent historian describes it in the Books of Samuel and Chronicles. Thus the same ardent love to the house of God appears in both. How instinctively one feels the harmony between the character self-portrayed in Ps. xxvi. 8; Ps. xxvii. 4; and Ps. lxxix. 9! Compare the historian's record of his words to Zadok (2 Sam. xv. 25), and still more in 1 Chron. xxix. 2, 3."<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, thus read and compared, the Psalms and the history mutually throw light upon and confirm each other. But in following out our plan in this section—of dealing with each psalm as a unity—we find this, as well as all the rest, furnishing material for pulpit exposition, which we could ill afford to lose. Our topic is—*Assailed integrity's final appeal*.

I. WE HAVE HERE THE CHARACTER OF AN UPRIGHT MAN, SKETCHED BY HIMSELF. It may not be a very wholesome exercise for a man to be engaged in—to sketch a moral portraiture of himself. Painters have often painted their own portraits; that requires but an outward gaze on one's outer self; but to delineate one's own likeness morally requires much introspection. Few can carry on much of that without becoming morbid through the process; and fewer still, perhaps, have fidelity enough to do it adequately and correctly. Yet there may be circumstances under which such abnormal work becomes even necessary (as we shall point out presently). And when such is the case, it is well if we can honestly point to such features of character and life as are presented to us here. 1. *The psalmist has a goodly foundation on which his life was built up.* (1) Trust in Jehovah (ver. 1). (2) God's loving-kindness (ver. 3). (3) God's truth (ver. 3); i.e. God's faithfulness. Note: That all the supports of the psalmist's integrity were *outside* himself. Happy is the man that, under all the circumstances of life, can stay his mind and heart on Divine faithfulness and love. If such underlying props cease to sustain, moral and spiritual worth will soon pine from lack of motive and hope. It is one of the evils of the day that some of our most popular novelists delineate religion without God.<sup>2</sup> 2. *The life built up on this foundation was one which may with advantage be imitated.* It was a life of: (1) Integrity (ver. 11). (2) Straightforward progress (ver. 1). No sliding. (3) Avoidance of evil associations (vers. 4, 5). (4) Cultivation of holy worship, song, and thanksgiving in the sanctuary<sup>3</sup> (vers. 6—8, 12). Note: (a) Those to whom God is the support of their life, will show a life worthy of such support. (b) Those who most value communion with God and a life hidden with him, will most fully appreciate and most diligently cultivate that stimulus and comfort which come from mingling with God's people in the worship of the sanctuary.

II. THE MOST UPRIGHT OF MEN MAY BE MISUNDERSTOOD, UNAPPRECIATED, MISREPRESENTED, AND ASSAILED. Speaking roughly and generally, it is no doubt true that, on the whole, a man's reputation will be the reflection of what he is, and that most men go for what they are worth. And yet, so long as there are envious hearts, jealous dispositions, unbridled tongues, few can be regarded as absolutely safe from detraction and slander. Our Lord Jesus implies and even states as much as this (cf. Matt. v. 44; x. 25; xviii. 6, 7; John xv. 18). See Peter's words (1 Pet. ii. 12; iv. 14); see Paul's words (Rom. xii. 18, 19). Paul had to bear much in the way of

psalm, "The psalmist lived during one of the darker parts of the period between Ezra and the Maccabees." But not an atom of proof is given of that statement. All we know is *ipse dixit*. We abide by the heading of the psalm, until some reason for the contrary is shown; but see note 3.

<sup>1</sup> 'Horæ Psalmicæ,' pp. 49, 75.

<sup>2</sup> For a masterly exposure of this evil, see Rev. Wm Arthur's work, 'Religion without God.'

<sup>3</sup> The word rendered "compass thine altar," etc., is thought by Ewald and Lengerke to refer to David's religious dances round the altar (see Geikie, 'Hours with the Bible,' vol. iii. p. 235). If so, Cheyne's assertion as to date is still more manifestly unjustifiable and rash.

depreciation from some who even denied his apostleship. Job was surrounded with "miserable comforters," who thought, by defaming him, to defend God! Such trials are hard to bear. They may arise (1) from the occasional foibles of a good man being magnified by the slanderer into sins; (2) from the utter impossibility of bad men reading aright the character of the just and pure. Having no virtue themselves, they cannot credit others with any. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" "He hath a devil," etc. Many can say the words in Ps. lvi. 5.

III. IT IS AN INFINITE RELIEF, UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, THAT THE BELIEVER CAN APPEAL TO HIS GOD. The whole psalm is such an appeal. True, the Infinite Eye can discern flaws and faults where we suspect none; but then the same perfect gaze discerns the desire after being right and pure and true, however far the believer may be from realizing his own ideal. The suppliant has to do, moreover, with One who never misunderstands, and whose glory is in his loving-kindness and truth. And from a Christian point of view we must remember that we have a High Priest who was *in all points* tried like as we are, *yet without sin*, and who can therefore pity what is frail, and pardon what is wrong. What a mercy to have *such* a throne of grace to which to flee!

IV. THE APPEAL WILL BE MARKED BY SPECIFIC ENTREATY. Here there are four lines of supplication. 1. That God would vindicate him, and not let him be mixed up in confusion with the men whose sin he hates (vers. 1, 9, 10). He looks to God, as Job did, as his Vindicator (Job xix. 25). 2. That God would search and prove him (ver. 2; cf. Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24). 3. That God would purify him (ver. 3). So the word here rendered "try" indicates.<sup>1</sup> He is upright before men, but he does not pretend to be perfect before God. 4. That God would entirely deliver him from the surroundings of ungenial and unholy men (vers. 9, 10). Whether the psalmist intended any reference to a future state or no, the believer now cannot help so applying the words. Who could endure the thought of evil and good *always* being mixed up together? The Divine mandate is, "Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matt. xiii. 13). Then will come the final severance.

V. THE RESULT OF SUCH APPEAL WILL NOT BE FRUITLESS OR VAIN. (Ver. 12.) "His prayer has been heard; he is safe; he stands on the open, level table-land, where he has room to move, and where his enemies cannot hem him in; and therefore he fulfils the resolve made before (ver. 7), and publicly pours out his thanksgivings to God" (Perowne). Whoever thus lays his complaints before God will find deliverance in God's own appointed time; we must leave, however, the "when" with the great Defender. Either (1) on earth in our day, (2) on earth after our day, or (3) in heaven, God will bring us and our reputation out to the light. "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday" (Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6).—C.

Vers. 1—12.—*Integrity*. All through the Scriptures "integrity" is commended. It is a characteristic of the saints. Whatever else they are, they must be men of integrity. This does not mean that they are morally perfect, or that they have any ground for trusting in their own righteousness; but it means that they have an "honest and good heart." Whatever may have been their past life, or however much of imperfection may still cleave to them, they are conscious of a pure intent, a firm and steadfast resolve to trust only what is true, to do only what is right, and to order their whole conduct according to the holy will of God. They can say, as Joseph's brethren did, "We be true men;" or with Paul, "We serve God with a pure conscience."

I. INTEGRITY IS ESSENTIAL TO A RIGHT RELATION TO GOD. God desireth "truth in the inward parts." All guile and falsehood are offensive to him. If we are to come to him, we must come just as we are; and if we are to abide with him, we must walk in the truth. Integrity lies at the very basis of faith, and "without faith it is impossible to please God."

II. INTEGRITY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE POSSESSION OF A TRUE CHARACTER. "There is no redeeming efficacy in right intent; taken by itself, it would never vanquish the inward state of evil at all. And yet it is just that by which all evil will be vanquished, under Christ and by grace, because it puts the soul in such a state as makes the grace-power of Christ co-working with it effectual." "The sinning man, who comes into

<sup>1</sup> See Perowne thereon.

integrity of aim, is put thereby at the very gate of faith, where all God's helps are waiting for him" (Bushnell). There is a vital connection between "integrity" and "truth" (vers. 1, 3). "Truth" is of God. "Integrity" belongs to us. We can only have truth, as we receive it from God. We can only have "integrity" as we allow God's truth to rule our hearts and our lives. First the heart is made right by being directed into the love of God, and then the life is made holy and beautiful by being swayed by the will of God. This leads to unity and completeness of character.

III. INTEGRITY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE RIGHT DISCHARGE OF OUR SOCIAL DUTIES. In society we meet with "vain persons," "dissemblers," and "evil-doers" (vers. 4—6). This is a test and an education. A man is known by his friends. There is a power for good in good companionships, and for evil in evil companionships. But if we are walking in truth, we cannot but hate all that is alien and hostile to truth. Our choice will be truth, and not vanity. Our delight will be in honesty, not in "dissemblers." Our fellowship will be with the righteous, and not with "evil-doers" (Ps. cxix. 63). It is only as we ourselves are true that we can commend the truth to others. It is only as we ourselves are upright in all our dealings that we can secure respect and confidence, and that we can best advance the interests of religion.

IV. INTEGRITY IS ESSENTIAL TO FULL DELIGHT IN RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES. (Vers. 6—8.) There are some who are neglectful (Heb. x. 25); there are others who satisfy themselves with formal observances (2 Tim. iii. 5). In these ends there can be no real pleasure in what is done. But where there is integrity, the heart is engaged, there will be diligence, preparation and prayer, and increasing joy in the worship and service of God (Pss. xxxiii. 31; cxix. 2). God's presence is the attraction and life of all true worship. The more deeply we feel our sinfulness, the more earnestly will be our cry for mercy. The more truly we realize that the will of God is "our sanctification," the more fervently shall we "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

V. THAT INTEGRITY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE ASSURED HOPE OF A BRIGHT FUTURE. (Vers. 9—12.) The very fact of what we are is a prophecy as to destiny (Rom. v. 10; Phil. i. 6). Looking to the past, we confess that it is wholly of grace that we have been turned unto God. Looking within, we are conscious of a sincere resolve to follow after holiness. Looking to the future, we are able to cast ourselves with implicit confidence on the care of God our Saviour. God is true, and he will not forsake. God is just, and he will never condemn the righteous with the wicked. It is only those whose hearts are right with God that can face the future without fear. When we commit ourselves to God we are safe. We have not only a sure standing, as accepted in Christ Jesus, but we are comforted by the fellowship of kindred hearts, and cheered by the hope of being kept from falling, and having in the end an "entrance ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. i. 5—11).—W. F.

Vers. 1—12.—*The oppressed righteous man.* It is impossible to say on what occasion the psalm was composed, or from what kind of trouble it prays to be delivered. The theme is—Only he who can say with truth, "I have walked in integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord," may depend upon Divine aid in trouble; but *we* may do so with full confidence. In the first verse the whole psalm is summed up.

I. A PRAYER FOR HELP IN TROUBLE. "Judge me," equivalent to "vindicate my rights and rescue me from injustice." The only clue to the meaning of the prayer is in the ninth verse, "Take not my soul away with the wicked, and my life with men of blood." He was in some way suffering; but he prays that he may not fall into the utter ruin which is the portion of the wicked—the penalty of *daring* sin, nor the fatherly chastisement of *infirmity*. The psalmist's faith was that God could not involve the righteous in destruction with the ungodly, but would separate between them even in their outward lot. This in *great part* true. "Godliness has the promise of the life that now is"—*outwardly and inwardly*. So far as we know, the psalmist did not know of any other world where God could interpose to show his approval of the righteous and his disapproval of the wicked.

II. THE GROUND OF THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER. "I have walked in mine integrity, I have trusted in the Lord." But if I have not, do thou show it me (ver. 2). But I

think I have; for thy love *has* been before my eyes, and I continually thought upon thy truth, or faithfulness (ver. 3). The two main grounds on which he prays for help are his morality and piety—*integrity* and *trust*, expanded further in the life (ver. 8). 1. *His morality*. "Integrity," equivalent to "with the mind aiming at the right and true, and with an undivided purpose. He had avoided all voluntary *association with the wicked* (vers. 4, 5). He would neither go (walk) nor sit with them. All his sympathies went against them, equivalent to "hated them." The company we keep *from choice* is a true and strong indication of our character. 2. *His piety*. "I wash my hands," etc. The hands the instruments of action. His actions are cleansed from defilement; and this is his preparation for worship. "If thy brother hath aught against thee . . . first be reconciled unto thy brother," etc. "I hold fast by thine altar." This placed in opposition to the assembly of the wicked, which he shuns. The purifying of the heart and conduct is naturally *followed* by worship, and *preceded* by it. *He would proclaim God's wondrous works to the people*: only he whose heart is full of them can worthily and truly publish them. He shall come to share in new wonders. *He loved the house of God*, because there God manifested his glory to him (ver. 8). Manifested himself; and he sees him as Isaiah saw him, "high and lifted up." *He fully trusted in the deliverance he sought*; for he expected to praise the Lord in the congregation (ver. 12).—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXVII.

THIS psalm is one of those which have been called "composite" ('The Psalms,' by Four Friends, p. 67); and certainly it falls into two parts which offer the strongest possible contrast the one to the other. Part i. (vers. 1—6) is altogether joyous and jubilant. It records, as has been said, "the triumph of a warrior's faith." Part ii. (vers. 7—14) is sad and plaintive. It pleads for mercy and forgiveness (vers. 8—10). It complains of desertion (ver. 10), calumny (ver. 12), and imminent danger (vers. 11, 12). It still, indeed, maintains hope, but the hope has only just been saved from sinking into despair by an effort of faith (ver. 13), and a determination to "wait" and see what the end will be (ver. 14). It is thought to "express the sorrows of a martyr to the religious persecutions at the close of the monarchy" (Four Friends, p. 68).

For these reasons the psalm has been supposed to be "composite;" but the question arises—If the two parts, being so entirely unlike, were originally distinct and unconnected, what should have led any arranger or editor to unite them? To this question there seems to be no possible answer; and thus the very diversity of the two parts would seem to show an original union.

According to the statement of the title, the psalm was written by David. It has

many characteristics of his style, the sudden transition and change in the tone of thought being one. It is quite conceivable that during the rebellion under Absalom, having obtained some important success, he may have considered it an occasion for thanksgiving; and that, after his thanks were paid, his thoughts may have reverted to the still-continuing difficulties of the situation, the danger which impended (vers. 11, 12), the calumnies to which he was exposed (ver. 12), the desertion of those near and dear to him (ver. 10), the fact that the chastisement had been provoked by his own sin (ver. 9); and so the strain, which began in jubilation, may not unnaturally have ended in a plea for mercy.

The psalm consists of a strophe (vers. 1—6), an antistrophe (vers. 7—12), and a brief epode (vers. 13, 14).

Ver. 1.—The Lord is my Light (comp. John i. 7—9; xii. 35, 36, 46; 1 John i. 5). The statement does not occur in any other place in the Old Testament, though the idea may be found in Isa. lx. 1, 20; Micah vii. 8; and elsewhere. Light has been well called "this profoundly beautiful name of God" (Delitzsch). And my Salvation (comp. Ps. xviii. 2; lxii. 2, 6). Whom shall I fear? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31). Who can be to be feared? (see Ps. cxviii. 6). Not man certainly; for "what can man do unto us?" Not other gods; for they are nonentities. Not devils; for they can do nothing but by God's permission.

The Lord is the Strength of my life; literally, *the stronghold* (comp. Ps. xxviii. 8; xxxi. 4; lxxi. 2; cxliv. 2). Of whom shall I be afraid? The question is superfluous, but is repeated to complete the balance of the clauses.

Ver. 2.—When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. A special occasion seems to be intended, so that the LXX. have rightly, *ἡσθένουσιν καὶ ἕρπονται*. Some unrecorded event in the war with Absalom before the final struggle, is probably alluded to. There is an emphasis on "*mine enemies*," which implies that the adversaries were not the foes of the country, but David's personal foes.

Ver. 3.—Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. In the first burst of joy at his recent victory, the "host" which remains unconquered seems of light account—let them advance—let them "encamp against him"—his heart will not be afraid; but when the joy has had full vent, there is a reaction; the enemies then appear more formidable, and God's aid is besought against them (see vers. 9—12). Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. "In this" may be either "in the fact that the Lord is my Light and my Salvation" (ver. 1), or "in case of such an event as war and attack on the part of the enemy."

Ver. 4.—One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after. A most emphatic introduction of the new topic! Amid all my joy and jubilation, there is still one thing which I need, which I entreat Jehovah to grant—that thing I shall continue to seek after until I obtain it, viz. that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. The psalmist is evidently debarred access to the sanctuary; he feels his exclusion from it a terrible privation; he longs to be there—to "dwell" there (comp. Ps. xxvi. 8); to offer there "sacrifices of joy" (ver. 6); to sing there psalms of thanksgiving. He would fain also behold the beauty of the Lord—*τὴν τρυφήν αὐτοῦ*, LXX.—"all that is engaging and gracious in his revelation of himself" (Kay); "not the outward beauty of the sanctuary, but the gracious attributes which its ritual symbolized" ('Speaker's Commentary'). And to inquire in his temple. It has already appeared, from Ps. v. 7, that the word "temple" or "palace" (*heykal*) was applied in David's time to the tabernacle.

Ver. 5.—For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me. This is not to be understood literally. David means that his *spirit* will find a refuge with God in times of trouble, not (as

some Jewish expositors argue) that he will actually hide from his enemies inside the tabernacle. From such a sacrilege he would have shrunk. He shall set me up upon a rock (comp. Ps. xviii. 2; lxi. 2). The "Rock" is God himself, who is always David's final Refuge.

Ver. 6.—And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me. A further and final triumph is confidently anticipated. God will complete his work. He will repulse the "host" by which David is about to be attacked (ver. 3), give him victory over it, bring him back from exile, and grant him once more free access to the sanctuary. Therefore, says the psalmist, will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; or, "sacrifices of joyful sound," accompanied with singing and instrumental music (comp. Ps. lxxxix. 15). I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord (comp. Eph. v. 19).

Vers. 7—14.—The strain now entirely changes. The rhythm alters from a jubilant double beat to a slow and mournful cadence. A cry is raised for mercy and pity—the wrath of God is deprecated—rejection and desertion are contemplated and prayed against (vers. 7—10). The danger from the enemy appears great and formidable (vers. 11, 12). With an effort of faith, the writer just saves himself from despair (ver. 14), and then, in brave words, braces himself up for further endurance.

Ver. 7.—Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. There is no "when" in the original. The clauses are short, and broken, "Hear, O Lord: with my voice I call; pity me, and answer me."

Ver. 8.—When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. The order of the words in the original is as follows: "To thee said my heart—Seek ye my face—thy face, Lord, will I seek." And the full meaning seems to be, "To thee said my heart—Hast thou said unto men, Seek ye my face? I for one will obey thee—Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The command, "Seek ye my face," had been given by David to the people on the day that he set up the ark upon Mount Zion (1 Chron. xvi. 11). It was probably regarded as implied in Dent. iv. 29.

Ver. 9.—Hide not thy face far from me. It would be useless for David to "seek God's face," if God should determine to "hide his face" from him. David felt from time to time as if God's face was hidden from him, as we see in other psalms (Psa. x.

1; xlii. 1; lxix. 17, etc.) and so also did other saints (Pss. xlii. 24; lxxxviii. 14). In most instances, probably, God sends the feeling as a chastisement, that the heart may turn with more sincerity to him. Put not thy servant away in anger; *i.e.* reject me not—cast me not off. The verb used is very strong and emphatic. Thou hast been my Help. Ever in the past I have had thee for Helper (comp. Pss. iii. 3—7; iv. 1; vi. 8—10; xviii. 2, etc.). God's goodness to us in the past must ever be our chief ground of confidence in him for the future. Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation (comp. Ps. xciv. 14).

Ver. 10.—When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. We are not to gather from this that David's father and mother had forsaken him. They were probably dead at the time of his flight from Absalom. What David means is that, even if forsaken by his nearest and dearest, he would not be forsaken by God. The expression is proverbial.

Ver. 11.—Teach me thy way, O Lord (comp. Ps. xxv. 3, and the comment *ad loc.*). And lead me in a plain path; literally, *a level path*—a path traversing a flat and smooth country, not one where the ground is rugged and beset with rocks and precipices. Because of mine enemies. David's enemies are ever at hand, to swallow him up (Ps. lvi. 2). If his way be not plain and smooth, it will be to their advantage and to his detriment.

Ver. 12.—Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies; literally, *the soul of mine enemies*; *i.e.* their desire (see Pss. xxxv. 25; xli. 2), which was no doubt to capture him, and bring him a prisoner to Jerusalem. For false witnesses are risen up against me. The party which attached itself to Absalom accused David of cruelty to the house of Saul (2 Sam. xvi. 8), and probably of other crimes and misdemeanours. Absalom himself accused him of a failure in his kingly duties (2 Sam. xv. 3). And such as breathe out

cruelty; or, *violence*. To “breathe out” violence, threats, slaughter, malice, etc., is a common metaphor in many languages (Acts ix. 1; Aristoph., ‘Eq.’ l. 437; Hor., ‘Od.’ iv. 13, l. 19, etc.).

Ver. 13.—I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. In the original, by the figure *apostopesis*, the apodosis is omitted, “had I not believed that I should see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living [*i.e.* in this present world], then . . .” He shrinks from stating the consequences. He would have fainted, or despaired, or lost all faith in religion (compare, for similar uses of the figure *apostopesis*, Gen. iii. 22; xxxi. 41; l. 15; Exod. xxxii. 32; Dan. iii. 15; Zech. vi. 15; Luke xiii. 9). By an effort of faith, the psalmist saved himself from the despair which threatened to seize upon him, and assured himself that he would yet experience “the goodness of the Lord” in some merciful interposition and deliverance, while he still remained on earth, before he “went whence he should not return—to the land of darkness and the shadow of death, a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness” (Job x. 21, 22).

Ver. 14.—Wait on the Lord. This is an exhortation, not to others, but to himself (comp. Ps. lxii. 5; and see also Pss. xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 5). His stronger self exhorts his weaker self not to despair, but to wait upon God—to tarry, *i.e.*, the Lord's leisure—and, meanwhile to be of good courage; or, *be strong* (comp. Deut. xxxi. 6; Josh. i. 6; 1 Chron. xxii. 13), as the phrase is elsewhere generally translated. “Be strong,” he says to himself, and he (*i.e.* God) shall strengthen thine heart. “Aide-toi, le ciel l'aidera.” Make an effort to be strong, and the strength will be given thee, as thou makest it. Then in this strength, thus given, continue thy waiting—Wait, I say, on the Lord.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 8.—*The believing heart's obedience to God's command.* “When thou saidst,” etc. If we were to translate strictly word for word, we should read this verse, “To thee said my heart—Seek ye my face—thy face, Jehovah, I will seek.” Our translators (and Revisers) have wisely preferred plain English to pedantic rigour, and have given as the probable meaning, “When thou saidst,” etc. This, says Calvin, is a dialogue between the believing heart and God. He likens the Divine invitation, “Seek ye my face,” to the key wherewith faith opens the door for prayer. “Without this prelude, no one shall lead the chorus of prayer.” The reply of the heart he likens to the echo sleeping in silence, till the voice calls it forth.

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY SEEKING GOD'S FACE? 1. *To seek the favour of God; q.d.* his pardoning mercy, the smile of his approval, the assurance of his loving-kindness, the happy, peaceful sense of his presence and care. There is a notion in many minds

that because God is love, he must love all alike—as he dispenses rain and sunshine to all alike—good and bad, lovely and hateful; and that because he is just, he must treat all alike. Such views can be upheld neither from Scripture nor from common sense. Justice lies not in treating all alike, but in treating each according to character and conduct. Love that can see no fault is as blind as hate that can see no goodness. A face that wears the same bland meaningless smile to every one is intolerable. To suppose that God has no more approval and love for a Christian mother training her child to love him, or a Christian martyr dying for truth, than for a seducer, a thief, an assassin, is to deny God's moral character. It is to substitute an idol of fancy for the living God. The whole gospel hinges on this. God's universal love is shown in the provision whereby *each sinner* may seek and receive his favour (John iii. 16; Rom. v. 1, 2, 10, 11). 2. *To seek to know God.* When we look into one another's faces, we read the soul. Smiles and frowns and tears, the flash of pleasure or of anger, the softening of tender feeling, speak a language which all read intuitively. In its fulness, any such direct knowledge of God is impossible for us (Exod. xxxiii. 18, 20). But Jesus is to us *as the Face of God* (2 Cor. iv. 6; Heb. i. 3; John i. 18). God's character is revealed; while the Divine glory is veiled and softened to suit our weakness (John xiv. 9; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; Matt. v. 8). 3. *To have fellowship with God*; personal communion (1 John i. 3). This leads to a second question—

II. **HOW IS THIS COMMAND TO BE OBEYED**; this invitation accepted; this purpose carried out; this fellowship experienced? 1. *By prayer.* Looking at vers. 4—6, we may suppose a reference to the temple, with its twofold service of sacrifice and praise. But we must not limit the words to this. They are the language of a heart that waits in secret on God (Matt. vi. 6). 2. *By the study of God's Word.* The whole Bible is the record of God's continuous revelation of himself; partly in words—laws, declarations, predictions, promises; partly in his dealings—with nations, with individuals, with his Church; completely and most gloriously in Christ Jesus—his Person, teaching, atoning death, resurrection, enthronement in glory. If we would gain the knowledge spoken of (2 Pet. iii. 18), we must observe the condition (Col. iii. 16). They that seek shall find (Isa. xlix. 49; Jer. xxix. 13).

Ver. 8.—(Second sermon.) *The reward of diligent search.* “My heart said,” etc. “Seek, and ye shall find,” is one of the great laws of life. The miner must dig for the precious ore; the fisherman launch out into the deep, and let down his nets for a draught; the husbandman must plough and sow and have long patience, if he is to reap. How is it that in these days the secrets of nature have been laid bare as never before? Because men have sought as they never sought before. And why, in the midst of these discoveries, have so many keen eyes failed to find God? Because they have not sought (Jer. xxix. 13).

I. **THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH, LAYING HOLD ON GOD'S PROMISE.** Faith is trust. We do not trust God because we believe his Word, but believe his promise because we trust him (Heb. xi. 6). But he has not left us to vague trust (reasonable though that would have been). He has filled the Bible with promises “exceeding great and precious” (Isa. lv. 1, 6, 7; Jer. xxix. 11—14; Luke xi. 9). We need not ask what particular reference lies in “when thou saidst.” God is always saying it.

II. **THE LANGUAGE OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMAND.** The invitation of a king is a command. Every promise carries in its bosom a duty; every duty, a promise.

III. **THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE.** “My heart said.” The utterance of holy desire, longing after communion with God. Prayer is more than simple asking; it is communion of spirit with our Father and our Saviour, by the Holy Ghost (Matt. vi. 6; Jude 20).

Ver. 11.—*A double safeguard.* “Lead me in a plain path.” This is a wise, humble, comprehensive prayer. Like the entire psalm, it is the language of a heart deeply taught by experience. It asks for a double safeguard—Divine guidance and a plain path. If aurs of the one, why ask for the other? Answer: (1) Because a great part of God's leading just consists in making the path plain; (2) because danger and temptation beset even the plainest path—“because of mine enemies.” At every step we need God's upholding and protecting hand.

I. A PATH EASY TO SEE; free from intricacy and obscurity. In the margin, "a way of plainness." The Hebrew word (like our English "plain") signifies "level" (see Isa. xlii. 16, "straight"). In a mountainous region the path is winding, often hidden a few yards ahead. On the open plain you see it for miles. As a rule, the straight path in life is the plain path. The same Hebrew word also means "uprightness," "righteousness" (Ps. xlv. 6). Duty is commonly much more easy to discern than expediency; "What is right?" than "What is polite, worldly wise?" One of the great trials of life is when duty is not plain; duties seem to clash. Then comes in the comfort and strength of this prayer, "Teach me thy way!" (Ps. xxv. 5, 8, 9). God's way must be the right way; "and he will make it plain."

II. A SAFE AND EASY PATH; at all events, in comparison with the wrong path. Not climbing the sharp ascent of the Hill Difficulty, nor winding along the slippery edge of temptation, nor descending into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. God cannot always grant this prayer in this sense. Yet Christ teaches us to offer it (Luke xxii. 40; Matt. vi. 13). If, nevertheless, the path by which God sees fit to lead us—either for spiritual discipline and growth, or for greater usefulness—be rough, dark, dangerous; the spirit of this prayer may nevertheless be answered by a larger measure of guidance and strength. "In the mount, the Lord is seen."<sup>1</sup> In the furnace is "the Son of God." In Gethsemane, the angel. When "all hope was taken away," God's angel told Paul that all were to be saved for his sake (Acts xxvii. 20, 22—24). Be the path what it may, those shall be safe who trust God's leading (Isa. xxxv. 8; Rom. viii. 28; Jude 24; Prov. xv. 19).

This prayer is a prayer against three dangers. 1. Choosing our own way (Prov. xiv. 12). 2. Trusting, even in the plainest way, to our own strength and wisdom (Prov. iii. 5, 6; Jer. x. 23). 3. Being left to our own weakness; or distrusting, in the darkest path, God's leading (Isa. xliii. 1, 2).

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—16.—*Jehovah's self-revelation, and faith's response thereto.* There is no known character and career in Scripture that would correspond to this psalm as well as those of David. And it seems difficult to resist the conclusion that the words in ver. 10 were written about the same time that those in 1 Sam. xxii. 3 were spoken. The objection of Delitzsch, that David left his father and mother, not they him, is of no weight; for either way his peril and exposure were such that he was left without them; and we are left to wonder why they consented to be sundered from him. But these chequered experiences in life serve to bring out to him more and more fully the wealth of care and love that his God makes over to him. If we were asked whether this psalm is one of those which come directly from God, and so contain a revelation from him, we should reply, "It is one of those records of the experience of an Old Testament saint who could triumph in God as the revealed God of his salvation." What God was to the saints of old, he is to his people still. Therefore the psalm discloses God's revelation of himself to his people of the olden time, and it is one in which believers now may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And the expositor will have here a rich mine for exploration, as in the light of this psalm he studies *God's self-revelation to his saints, and faith's response thereto.* Let us study these in order.

I. WE HAVE HERE INDICATED THE FULNESS OF GOD'S SELF-REVELATION TO HIS SAINTS. The revelation of God which is implied in this psalm is one of exceeding tenderness, richness, and glory. 1. *God himself had led the way in inviting souls to seek him.* (Ver. 8, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face."<sup>2</sup>) The heart of God desires the friendship and fellowship of man. Our hearts are so made they can rest only in God; God's heart is such that he seeks a rest in us. The fact of his giving an invitation to us to seek him is proof of this (cf. Isa. xlv. 19; lv. 6; liv. 6). So also is the

<sup>1</sup> So Gen. xxii. 14 may be rendered; at all events, this is the meaning of the proverb: When faith is strained almost to breaking point, God speaks, and all is plain: Isaac is spared; the sacrifice provided; Abraham blessed.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. xxi. 1 (Hebrew). See Fausset on this expression, in his 'Horeæ Psalmicæ,' p. 47.



complaint of God when men do not seek him (Isa. xliii. 23—26). And still more the declared joy of God when souls are at rest in him (Zeph. iii. 17). See this taken over to the New Testament (John iv. 23). But the grandest illustration of all is in the fact (Luke xix. 10) of which the whole of Luke's fifteenth chapter is the fullest declaration (still further, see Rev. iii. 20). In fact, had it not been for this self-manifestation of God's heart, we must all have been agnostics for ever! 2. *Wheresoever men open the heart to God's invitation, he proves himself worthy of himself.* The student may well luxuriate in the various names which the psalmist delights to apply to God as his God. Note: (1) The terms themselves. (a) Light (ver. 1). "There shines on him [the psalmist] a sun that sets not and knows no eclipse. This sublime, infinitely profound name for God, אֱלֹהִים, is found only in this passage" (Delitzsch, *in loc.*). (b) Salvation (ver. 1). Spiritually as well as temporally. (c) The Fortress of his life (ver. 1), in which he was perpetually hidden. (d) Guardian (ver. 10). One who would manifest a tenderer care and love than even parents feel, and who, when they are removed from us, will be our Guardian<sup>1</sup> still. (e) Helper (ver. 9). Coming with timely aid in every emergency. Note: (2) The individualizing care of God. The word "my" should be emphasized in each case: "*my* Light;" "*my* Salvation," etc. The experience of those who fling themselves on God's care and love is that he manages as beautifully and precisely for them as if he had no one else for whom to care. Hence the prophet's rebuke of the unbelieving suggestion to the contrary (Isa. xl. 27). If God were less than infinite, doubts might creep in. As Faber sings—

"That greatness which is infinite has room  
For all things in its lap to lie:  
We should be crushed by a magnificence  
Short of infinity!"

**II. THE RESPONSES OF BELIEVING HEARTS TO GOD'S SELF-MANIFESTATION ARE VARIED AS THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE.** The whole psalm is one of responsive faith; though that response may be sometimes a plea, or a sigh, yea, even a groan, and at other times a shout of song as with trumpet-power. We have all these stages in this very psalm. Listen to the varied phases of the psalmist's words. Here is: 1. *Faith seeking.* (Ver. 8.) It is an infinite mercy to hear the sweet whisper of God to the heart, "Seek me." It is so wonderful that there should be any such sound from God to the sinful heart—any sound so tender and sweet. And what should the response be but this, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek"? We may well seek the acquaintance of God as *our* God, to be our Leader, Guide, and Sovereign Lord, even unto death. Note: Let the coming sinner never forget that, if he is seeking God, *God has sought him first.* We may never lose sight of the Divine order, "We love him, because he *first* loved us" (1 John iv. 19). 2. *Faith rejoicing in Divine companionship.* (Ver. 4.) In the Lord's house, his presence was specially manifested; and those who know the Lord know well that there is no home like being by their Saviour's side, in his house. There they see the "beauty" of the Lord; i.e. his grace, his love, his mercy. There their eyes see "the King in his beauty." They "inquire" in his temple for directions for daily life; or they muse on the glories of the temple as the seat of Jehovah's presence. Yea, God's love and care make them so happy that they must give vent to their joy as with trumpet-song. We often long for greater physical power to praise God in shouting; and the use of trumpet and organ gratifies this longing. We praise God, but the organ gives the voice-power (see ver. 6, Hebrew). 3. *Faith watching.* (Ver. 2; cf. Ps. xcii. 11, Authorized Version, but leave out the words in italics; Ps. xxxvii. 34—47.) It should be no joy to the righteous to see any one in trouble; yet they cannot but praise God when infamous plots are discovered, and the saints of God are delivered. 4. *Faith sheltering.* (Vers. 1, 5; Ps. xci.) No one—in earth or hell—can ever forge the dart or weapon that can pierce the saints' stronghold. When the Lord is the Fortress of their life, they are in a citadel that can never be invaded. 5. *Faith dreading.* (Ver. 9.) The thing most to be dreaded is the hiding of God's face, and being cast off by him. And can *faith* ever dread this? Yes, indeed; for there are moments when the sins of

<sup>1</sup> יִסְדּוֹ, "will take me up"—"as a child disowned by its parents, and taken up by the adoptive father from the streets" (Fausset).

the past do rise up so terribly into the memory, that for a while they seem to eclipse all besides; and then faith heaves a sigh and drops a tear. There may be as clinging a faith when uttering the wail of the first verse of the twenty-second, as when singing the peaceful song of the twenty-third psalm; for even in the darkest hour, faith says, "*My God!*" 6. *Faith hoping.* (Ver. 13; literally, "Had I not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living . . .") The sentence is unfinished. The translators have well supplied the blank. The thought is, "What would have become of me?" The trials of life are often so repeated and so keen, that were it not for God, his love sustaining the spirit under the weight of the present, and inspiring the heart with hope for the future, reason would give way, and the man be hopelessly crushed. It is God's love which makes life worth living. 7. *Faith triumphing.* (Ver. 1.) When we realize the glory of him whom we believe, there is no bound to our delight and exultation; and at such times we can laugh in defiance at our foes; yea, "smile at Satan's rage, and face a frowning world." We can, if need be, cherish something of Luther's daring, and "go to Worms, though there were as many devils as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses;" or, better still, we can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." We know that God will not call us to confront an enemy that we cannot lay low, nor to bear a cross which we cannot carry, nor to endure a trial we cannot sustain, nor to do a work which we cannot perform. His grace is sufficient for us. His strength is made perfect in weakness. Hence, in closing the psalm: 8. *Faith soliloquizes.* (Ver. 14.) It may be supposed to be addressed first to himself, and so, indirectly, to the people of God generally. The words, "He shall strengthen thine heart," are, rather, "Let thine heart be strong;" as if the psalmist would chide himself that he should ever have a moment's misgiving, when he has such a God in whom to trust, and such a stronghold in which to abide (Nah. i. 7). Be it ours to wait upon our God continually! This is the secret of a steady, upward, peaceful, and strong life. What may be before any of us, no human eye can discern, nor where our lot may be cast. But God is all-sufficient.

Note: 1. How sinful and foolish to incur the risks of life ourselves! To each and all of us God says, "Seek ye my face." Let our answer be, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek." And all that God has been to our fathers, he will be to us—our Light, our Salvation, our Helper, our Strength, our All! 2. None need quail before the risks of life, whatever they may be, who put their whole trust in God, and follow him everywhere! "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" 3. Never think to gain anything by paltering with duty. If a plain duty is before you, however difficult, go forward in the strength of the Lord, and fear nothing. He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Wherefore we may boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear; what can man do unto me?" Only trust in the Lord, and do right, and one by one you will see your foes stumble and fall, and you will be left in possession of the field, more than conqueror, through him that loveth you."

"Stand but your ground, your ghostly foes will fly,  
 Hell trembles at a heaven-directed eye;  
 Choose rather to defend than to assail,  
 Self-confidence will in the conflict fail.  
 When you are challenged, you may dangers meet,  
 True courage is a fixed, not sudden heat;  
 Is always humble, lives in self-distrust,  
 And will itself into no danger thrust.  
 Devote yourself to God, and you will find  
 God fights the battles of a will resigned.  
 Love Jesus! love will no base fear endure;  
 Love Jesus! and of conquest rest secure."

(Bishop Ken.)

C.

Vers. 1—13.—*True religion.* True religion begins with God. It is a call on his part; it is a response on ours (ver. 8). With some religion is a chance, as settled by birth. With others it is a custom—something received by tradition from the fathers. With others it is a convenience, the result of education, a matter of prudence and self-interest, something necessary to respectability and comfort in the world. In all such

cases there may be the form, but there cannot be the power, of godliness; there may be certain earthly advantages, but there is no real profit, neither the promise of the life that now is, nor of that which is to come. But with all who are taught of God, religion is a choice—the free, settled, rejoicing choice of the heart. It is God manifesting himself to the soul, and the soul in love and trust uniting and binding itself to God, to be his and his only for evermore. True religion is characterized by—

I. PERSONAL TRUST IN GOD, AS THE LORD OUR GOD AND OUR REDEEMER. “When I sit in darkness,” says Micah, “the Lord shall be a Light unto me” (Micah vii. 8). So says David here (ver. 1). We need “light,” from the beginning to the end of our life. God is our Light. All real illumination to the mind, the conscience, and the heart, is from him. Light is revealing. As we draw near to God, the mists and clouds of passion and self-love are driven away, and all things stand out clear and distinct as they really are. There is not only the revelation of ourselves, but the revelation of God. We see ourselves as sinners, guilty and vile; we see God as a Saviour, and we trust him utterly (John i. 5; viii. 12; 1 John i. 5; 2 Cor. iv. 6).

II. FEARLESS DEVOTION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD, AS THE FREEST, THE RIGHT-FULLEST, AND THE MOST BLESSED OF ALL SERVICES. Religion is more than knowledge, or feeling, or obedience to the moral law. It is a life. It not only implies trust, but love and service. There are difficulties and trials. We look back and remember times of danger (ver. 2). When we were in straits and fears. But God brought us help. As it was with David (1 Sam. xvii. 37; xxx. 6), so it was with us. In thought of what God has done for us, we strengthen our hearts. Confidence comes from experience. Whom we have tried we trust. The friend we have found faithful, we cleave to. The physician whose remedies we have proved good, we confide in. The commander under whom we have conquered, we follow bravely to other fields. So do we trust in God. Looking to the future, we may imagine greater trials and distresses than we have yet encountered (ver. 3). The psalmist conjures up a terrible scene. As in a picture, we see the mustering of the forces, the proud array of the enemy with tents and banners, the shock and terror of the battle, when host met host in furious strife. But, like the palmist, let us not flinch or fear. God is with us. “In this will I be confident” (1 Kings xxii. 19; 2 Kings vi. 15; Acts xx. 24).

III. INCREASING DELIGHT IN GOD, AS THE SATISFACTION AND JOY OF THE HEART. Religion establishes right relations between the soul and God. Every barrier is removed, and free access and friendly communion have been secured. This is beautifully brought out in the words, “One thing have I desired of the Lord” (ver. 4). One thought has the mastery. One desire gives unity and concentration to all effort. One affection binds the heart and the life into a holy fellowship. God is All and in all. The singleness of purpose branches into two main streams. One is *meditation*: “To behold the beauty of the Lord;” the other is like unto it, *practice*: “To inquire in his temple” (ver. 4). This shows the bent of the renewed soul. There is an inward relish for what is good. There is a delight in all that is true and beautiful. Every living soul is an inquirer. Truth is not born with us, nor can it be obtained without our own efforts. It must be sought for its own sake. It must be wooed and won from love, that it may be a possession and a joy for ever. All right inquiry is practical. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” Thus coming to the light, and walking in the light, “we have fellowship with God, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” We have safety and peace (vers. 5, 6).

IV. ABSOLUTE SURRENDER TO GOD, FOR TIME AND FOR ETERNITY. True religion binds us to God, not only for life, but for ever. This is impressed in the prayer, which implies: 1. *Deep humility*. 2. *Holy aspirations*. 3. *Complete submission*. 4. *Victorious faith*. Three things are deprecated, rising one above the other in fearfulness. Displeasure (ver. 9); rejection, “Leave me not;” abandonment (ver. 10). But instead of these, we see, by faith, a glorious victory, and we hail its coming with renewed courage and praise (vers. 13, 14).—W. F.

Vers. 1—6.—*Fearless courage*. I. THE SECRET OF A FEARLESS COURAGE. 1. *His experience of what God had been to him*. “Light” in the darkest periods of his life. Light is a revealing power—for guidance. Salvation from his greatest dangers, temporal and spiritual. “Strength,” the power that had upheld his life when falling into

weakness and despair. Experience confirmed and rewarded the faith which he had in God. When experience coincides with our faith, then we are at our strongest. But faith must always live above experience. 2. *His experience of his enemies.* Their most furious and savage onsets had been baffled. This also was of God. And the explanation was—they were *wicked*, and he was *righteous*. This thought was fundamental to his faith—that God would not permit the *evil* to triumph over the *good*. His experience of this in the past gave him confidence for the future (vers. 2, 3). Our past victories should inspire us for the future.

II. HOW A FEARLESS COURAGE MAY BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED. 1. *By fellowship with God.* Beholding his beauty or goodness, and meditating upon it. The heart and mind must be fed and strengthened by constant converse with God in worship and holy thought. 2. *Frequent seclusion is the best way to strengthen ourselves for conflict.* (Ver. 5.) "In time of trouble, he shall hide me, and set me up upon a rock;" i.e. shut out from man, and shut in with God, is the way to conquer trouble and prepare for danger. 3. *Thankful worship is another help.* (Ver. 6.) "Sacrifices of joy," or "shouting," "singing praises,"—all mean grateful exercises of the heart towards God, recounting to ourselves what he has done for us in his wonderful goodness. Courage, hopefulness, must be fed with joy, and not with sadness and sorrow.—S.

Vers. 7—12.—*Strengthened in God.* "While strengthening himself in God (in the former part of the psalm), he is, perhaps, seized by some sudden fear lest he should be forsaken, or be overcome by the craft or malice of his enemies. Till now the danger which threatens him is as prominent an object as the salvation and defence were before." He earnestly prays now for that in which he had just boasted. And these are the grounds on which he bases the prayer.

I. HE HAD DIVINE WARRANT. The tenor of God's whole Word to man is, "Seek ye my face;" equivalent to "Come unto me for rest, for protection, for salvation." We are but obeying the Divine voice within and without us when we seek for refuge and an escape from all evil in God. Christ emphasized this truth when he cried, "Come unto me, all ye that labour," etc.

II. BECAUSE THERE WAS AN ABIDING RELATION BETWEEN HIM AND GOD. (Ver. 9.) He was God's servant; God had been his Help. The good Master would not cast the servant away in anger. Masters and servants were knit more closely together in early times than now; and the psalmist pleads this relation between them. Then God had helped him in former troubles, and God was too constant to change suddenly and to cast him away. How strong is our claim upon God in Christ! He is our Father for ever, and we his children.

III. BECAUSE GOD DRAWS NEARER WHEN THE DEAREST EARTHLY FRIENDS FORSAKE US. (Ver. 10.) Father and mother *had* forsaken him, and God had taken him up. Trouble often cools the love of human relations, but only increases the Divine pity, and attracts God the more closely to us. The psalmist knew this as a fact of experience, and he could urge it as a plea now in his present distress. Differences between human love, however strong, and the Divine love. No grain or taint of selfishness in the Divine love, which clings to us steadfastly, through all our sins and sorrows.

IV. BECAUSE HE WAS IN DANGER FROM TWO CLASSES OF ENEMIES. (Vers. 11, 12.) 1. *The cunning and deceitful.* More dangerous than open and violent enemies. Just as we are in more danger from those sins which try to look like virtues, than from sins which we *know* to be sins. Avarice is thought prudence; pride is self-respect; cruelty claims to be justice, etc. 2. *Those who employ open violence.* This is dangerous, because urged on by unrestrained passion. Our passions, yielded to and indulged, are dangerous enemies. We have need to pray, "Teach me thy way, and lead me in an even path."—S.

Vers. 13, 14.—*How to become strong.* Translation, "Oh, if I had not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" "Wait on the Lord; be strong, and let thine heart take courage; yea, wait on the Lord." The psalmist is speaking to himself, to encourage himself in firmer confidence in God, the believing half of his

soul addressing the despondent or weaker half. "I had fainted," or "had perished," is necessary to complete the sense of ver. 13. The passage teaches us *how to become strong to meet the dangers, difficulties, temptations, and afflictions of life.*

**I. FAITH IN THE GOODNESS OF GOD.** (Ver. 13.) The psalmist has a firm assurance that God will make his goodness manifest to us in our personal history. "He is good, to all, and his tender mercy is over all his works." That he will be good to us rests on the assurance that he will be good to all, and not because we have any superior or peculiar claim. For goodness is kindness or benevolence to those who have not merited or deserved it by their character or conduct. If we cannot see the manifest proofs that God has been as good to all as he has been to us, we must believe that the evidence will come some time; or, if we cannot see the proofs that he will be good to us—delivering and redeeming us according to our need—we must believe that he is doing all that can be done for us, *in seen and unseen ways* beyond our power of interpretation.

**II. WAITING UPON GOD.** This may mean one or both of two things. 1. *Service to God.* There is nothing so strengthening to our whole nature—nothing that so nerves us to meet danger and difficulties—as the doing all that we know to be the will of God—doing all known duty. An educating, developing power, in obedience to duty, which nothing can take the place of. 2. *Waiting for God; or, hope in him.* God has his own time and method of doing things. "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it;" "We are saved by hope."

**III. BY CULTIVATING COURAGE.** Moral courage. As a habit of the mind, and not only upon occasions; gathering up those considerations that foster and nourish a courageous heart. 1. *Our past successes* should help us to this, and even some of our failures, when we see how they might have been avoided. 2. *God is on our side*, and will help with the direct aid of his Spirit all who are aiming at the right. 3. *Things are possible to courageous minds* which are impossible to weak, cowardly hearts. "Let thine heart be strong." "To him that believeth all things are possible"—believeth in God and believeth in himself.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXVIII.

THIS short psalm consists of three parts: (1) a prayer for succour (vers. 1, 2); (2) a denunciation of the wicked (vers. 3—5); and (3) a thanksgiving for aid given, or regarded as certain to be given (vers. 6—9). Metrically, it contains three strophes, corresponding to the three subjects, and respectively of two, three, and four verses, thus gradually increasing in length. There is no reason for doubting the assertion of the title, that it is "a Psalm of David," but we cannot definitely assign it to any particular period of his life. It would suit almost any occasion when he was in danger or difficulty.

Ver. 1.—Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my Rock; be not silent to me; rather, as in the Revised Version, to thee, O Lord, will I call; my Rock, be not thou deaf unto me. "My Rock" belongs to the second clause. It is with David, in these early psalms, an *epitheton usitatum* (comp. Ps. xviii. 2;

xxvii. 5; xxxi. 2, 3; xl. 3; lvi. 2; lxii. 2, etc.). The Hebrew term used is sometimes *tsur*, sometimes *sela'*, which call to our minds the two great rock-fortresses of Tyre and Petra. Lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit; i.e. without hope, desperate.

Ver. 2.—Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee. God is said to hear prayer when he grants it, to be deaf to prayer when he withholds the boon requested. The use of the expressions "voice" and "cry" marks the earnestness of the prayers offered. When I lift up my hands. The usual attitude of a Hebrew in prayer (see Exod. ix. 29; xvii. 11, 12; 1 Kings viii. 22, 54; Ps. lxxiii. 4; cxli. 2; Lam. ii. 19; iii. 41). Originally, the idea probably was that the hands should be ready to receive the blessings which God would bestow. But, later on, the lifting up of the hands seems to have been regarded as symbolizing the lifting up of the heart (Lam. iii. 41). Towards thy holy oracle (see the comment on Ps. v. 7).

Ver. 3.—Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity (comp. Ps. xxvi. 9). The metaphor implied

in "draw me not away" is that of a hunter, drawing prey of all kinds to him enclosed within a net. The psalmist prays that he may not share the fate of the workers of iniquity, over whom he seems to see some terrible judgment impending. Which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. (For extreme instances of this kind of wickedness, see 2 Sam. iii. 27; xx. 9, 10; and for the wide prevalence of such treacherous dealing, comp. Ps. lv. 20, 21; Jer. ix. 8.)

Ver. 4.—Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours. The feeling of righteous indignation, naturally implanted in us, causes us to desire the punishment of the wicked, quite apart from any wrong that they may have done to ourselves (Aristotle, 'Rhet.' ii. 1, § 3). Give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert. Nothing satisfies our moral feelings but *exact* retribution.—*Εἰς τὴν πᾶσιν τὰς ἐρεξέ, δίκην καὶ ὁδοῖα γένοιντο*. David shows in both respects a moral nature uncorrupted by contact with the world of his day.

Ver. 5.—Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands. They do not note God's providential workings. If they did, they would see that judgment falls upon the wicked, and, seeing this, they would fear and abstain from evil. But they take no notice—God is not in all their thoughts. For this neglect and contempt of him, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

Vers. 6—9.—As, midway in Ps. xxvii., the tone changed from jubilation to humble entreaty, so, midway in the present psalm, there is a change from plaintive and humble entreaty to rejoicing and thanksgiving. The cause of the change would seem to have been a confident assurance, arising out of the very act of prayer, that the prayer is heard and granted, so that the happy results prayed for are certain to follow. Such an assurance is certainly not attained by all those whose supplications are earnest and devout; but David appears to have

enjoyed it not infrequently (see above, Ps. vi. 8—10; vii. 17, etc.).

Ver. 6.—Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications (comp. ver. 2, with which this is, of a purpose, made exactly to correspond).

Ver. 7.—The Lord is my Strength and my Shield (see Ps. xviii. 1, 2; cxix. 114). My heart trusted in him, and I am helped. As far as feeling goes, David is already "helped." He feels himself delivered out of his peril. Therefore, he says, my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song—literally, *out of my song*, which is explained to mean "cut of my store of song"—will I praise him. He is ready to offer thanksgiving for a mercy not yet received.

Ver. 8.—The Lord is their Strength; i.e. the Strength, not of himself alone, but of the whole people. The deliverance will be as much for their sake as for his. And he is the saving Strength of his anointed; literally, *and a Stronghold of salvation to his anointed is HE*. The welfare of David and that of the people are bound up together. God strengthens him for their sakes, that he may guide them aright and fight their battles, and give them dominion over their enemies. It was with this object that he chose him out of all Israel, and took him from the sheepfolds, and had him anointed king—that he might "feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance" (Ps. lxxviii. 71).

Ver. 9.—Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance. "In conclusion, the psalmist prays that the Lord would do eternally that which he had done now" (Hengstenberg)—"save" and "bless" his people—keep them from evil, and give them all that is good. Feed them also. As a shepherd does his flock (comp. Ps. xxiii. 1, 2; Isa. xl. 11). And lift them up for ever. Some explain the "lifting up" as carrying in his arms over rough places—a prolongation of the shepherd metaphor (Kay; 'Speaker's Commentary'); but, perhaps, the more ordinary meaning of the Hebrew word—"exalt," "lift up on high," "raise above others"—which is preferred by Bishop Horsley, Rosenmüller, and Hengstenberg, is intended.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Providence and prayer*. The contents of this psalm are in some respects similar to the contents of others already noticed. But there is one peculiarity about it to which we here propose to devote special attention. It is seen in the psalmist's prayer *against* his enemies. On account of such petitions, much reproach has been cast on the Bible itself—as if all the sixty-six books of which the Scriptures are composed were to be held responsible for the prayers and petitions of every Old Testament saint! No such absurdity could have root-hold if the actual state of the

case were clearly understood. And we deem it to be of no small importance that where readers of the Bible find special difficulty, expounders thereof should put forth special strength, and by no means pass lightly over such passages, or leave them unaccounted for. This psalm is a reflection of varied scenes which may be witnessed in the world—of the known laws of God's providence, of earnest desires which go up from the hearts of God's people in prayer, and of grateful songs which go forth from their lips in praise. There is no reason for attributing the psalm to any one else than to David. Nor do we know of any times in the ancient history which the psalm more clearly reflects than those of the shepherd-king. Nor is there any Old Testament character who would be so likely to speak and write and pray in the style of the psalm before us. In dealing with it as a unity (which method *alone* falls in with the plan of this section of the Commentary), we have four lines of thought to unfold.

I. HERE IS A TWOFOLD OUTLOOK. The writer of this psalm was the anointed of the Lord (ver. 8). He was Israel's king; and was withal encompassed by foes. Not only were there those who were the people of God, his inheritance (ver. 9), but there were also those who regarded not God, and who cared not for man (vers. 3, 5). And the time has not come when such a double outlook has ceased. The righteous, the wicked—tares and wheat—both are still on "the field of the world," growing together until the harvest.

II. HERE IS A TWOFOLD YEARNING OF THE PSALMIST. 1. *For the righteous.* (Ver. 9.) "Save *thy* people, and bless *thine* inheritance." Put the emphasis on "thy," "thine;" herein lies the force of the praying one's tender pleading with God "Feed them;" i.e. tend them, rule them; let them find thee all that thou art as their Shepherd. "Lift them up," equivalent to "bear them up," carry them in thine arms (Isa. lxiii. 9; xl. 11; Deut. i. 31; xxxii. 11; see Perowne hereon). 2. *Against the wicked.* (Ver. 4.) It is here that so many have found a difficulty. We acknowledge that there would be a difficulty if these were the words of God to man; but as they are the words of man to God, why should there be any difficulty at all? Is any one bound to defend every word that any saint ever offered in prayer? Surely not. It is, however, only fair to the writer to bear in mind: (1) That he does not pray against the wicked with personal vindictiveness, but regards them as the enemies of God (ver. 5), and of society likewise (ver. 3). (2) No saint's prayers ever could go beyond the limits of the inspiration and revelation which were granted to him. No one even now can pray beyond the limits of his own knowledge. In the Old Testament times the all-conquering love of God had not been revealed as it has been to us, and so could not yield fuel for prayer. (3) That such a prayer as this is an historical representation of the petitions of saints in the psalmist's time, and is no absolute model for our time, with our larger and warmer light-beams from on high. At the same time, we are bound also to remember that we ought not to cherish the like feelings towards the wicked that we do towards the righteous. Yea, if we are righteous, we cannot. And while we plead with God to build up those who are pure and true, we ought to plead with him to frustrate the designs of unreasonable and wicked men, and to arise and vindicate the great cause of righteousness and truth. And this we may do, while leaving it absolutely with God to deal with wicked people as he sees fit. The Judge of all the earth will do right, and we surely can leave the matter there. "Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord." Job's words are better than any prayers for vengeance: "I know that my Vindicator liveth." There let us rest. For we have to recognize—

III. A TWOFOLD ACTION OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE. He builda up the righteous, but disconcerts the schemes of the wicked. So the experience of life shows us, and so this psalm indicates. 1. *To the righteous.* God is (1) their Strength; (2) their Shield; (3) the Stronghold of salvation for them and for their anointed king. This may be applied in the highest sense (cf. Rom. viii. 28; Heb. ii. 10). 2. *To the wicked.* (Ver. 5.) "He shall break them down, and not build them up" (cf. Pss. xviii. 25, 26;

<sup>1</sup> On ver. 4 Calvin is worth careful perusal.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 8, "Their strength." "Pro מלך, eis, seu ei, legendum esse מלך, populo ejus, vix dubitari possit; partim propter consensum omnium interpretum antiquorum, excepto Chaldaeo, in hac lectione, partim propter contextum. Nam non adest substantivum, ad quod illud מלך referri possit" (Rogers on the Psalms, App. ii., no. 92).

xxxvii. 35; lxxiii. 18—20). God will seem to men according to what they are. If they follow his commandments, peace will attend their steps. If they violate them, all nature will be full of detectives, whips, and stings.

IV. A TWOFOLD AOT TOWARDS GOD. 1. *Prayer*. "Hear . . . when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle;"<sup>1</sup> i.e. towards the "mercy-seat" (ver. 2). Although he was not selfish enough to cramp his desires within the limits of his own personal need, yet he was not unnatural enough to leave himself out. In fact, God was so much to him that his very life seemed bound up in God and his loving-kindness; the lack of a message from God to his spirit would almost drive him to despair (vers. 1, 2). But, as is so often the case, the very psalms which begin with the deepest sighing end with the most joyous shouting. Hence, following on prayer, there is: 2. *Praise*. (Ver. 6.) The lower God takes us down in the valley of humiliation, the higher will he take us up on the mount of exultation (Isa. xli. 16). And those who spend most time with God in weeping and supplication will have the loudest and sweetest strains to raise over the wonders of delivering grace. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." This is as true of prayer as it is of work.

Note: Making all allowance for the difference of *tone* in the two dispensations, the Hebrew and the Christian, yet throughout both the same laws hold good. 1. That prayer is one of the forces by means of which God sways the world. 2. That his people have for thousands of years been praying to him to bring in righteousness and to put down wrong of every kind. 3. That it is *more* certain these prayers will be answered than that the sun will rise to-morrow. 4. And, consequently, it is for men to decide whether to their life there shall attach the privilege of being borne upon the hearts of all God's saints in prayer, or the peril of being surrounded with *petitions* that they may ultimately be put to shame.—C.

Vers. 1—9.—*Man's cry and God's response*. In this psalm we find—

I. MAN'S CRY TO GOD. (Vers. 1—5.) Prayer is an instinct of the heart. Man cries to man. There is a bond of brotherhood between all men. The simple fact that a brother is in need gives him a claim to help. Friend cries to friend. The nearer our relationships, the deeper our obligations. The child cries to its father. Whatever may be the conduct of others, we are sure that parents will do what they can for their children. With how much more reason and confidence may we cry to God! He is ever near. He is always pitiful. He will surely help all those who cry to him. It is true we may be tried, sorely tried. Distresses may multiply. Our fears may magnify our danger. We may tremble as on the verge of the gulf. But let us not despair. Bartimæus was not answered at the first, but he cried again. The Syro-Phœnician woman seemed at first to be met with repulse and refusal, but she pleaded the more earnestly. The sisters of Bethany were left for three whole days in their woe; but the Saviour came in his good time, bringing light and joy. So let us learn to pray and wait. Daniel took comfort by looking toward Jerusalem; let us look above, to Jesus, "the Author and Finisher of our faith."

II. GOD'S RESPONSE TO MAN'S CRY. (Vers. 6—9.) In the deepest sense, God's response to man's cry is Christ. In him God has come to us in human form, bringing salvation. Through him God is ever with us, to hear the prayer of the sinner and to satisfy the desires of his saints. When we pray it may be that the answer is delayed. As Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren, though love and kindness were in his heart all the time, so God may seem for a while to close his ear, and suffer us to struggle and cry in vain; but we are sure that his love does not change. He is not like Baal (1 Kings xviii. 27) or the god of Ekron (2 Kings i. 2). If he delays it is because this is needful. It is part of his discipline; it is necessary for the full accomplishment of his purposes. It may be also that God will answer our prayers in a way different from what we expected. We are weak and ignorant. Our minds are clouded, our hearts are confused. We are harassed and distressed by the things which press most closely upon us. We are not fit judges as to what is best. Let us confide in God. He knows what we are and what we need. His way is always the best way. Paul,

<sup>1</sup> "Thy holy oracle," דָּבָר (see Hengstenberg hereon; Dr. Moll, in Schaff's Lange; and the translation in 'The Psalms in Chronological Order,' by Three Friends).



hard pressed by the thorn in the flesh, besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. But he erred. It had been sent as a preventative, "lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations;" and it had not yet served its full purpose. God did not cause it to depart, but he did what was far better. He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And Paul, now better taught, cries, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. xii. 7—9). Baxter's rule is good, "As thou wilt, when thou wilt, and where thou wilt." But many times God is pleased to answer the prayers of his people by granting their requests. We ask light, and he gives light. We seek pardon, and he says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." We crave help in trouble, and he sends forth his angels for our comfort and deliverance. God's response to our cry calls for thanksgiving. Thus prayer ends in praise (vers. 6, 7). There is gratitude for deliverance. Faith is strengthened, hope is revived, and love breaks forth into joyful songs of victory.

"I'll praise my Maker with my breath,  
And when my voice is lost in death  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers.  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past  
While life and thought and being last,  
And immortality endures."

W. F.

**Vers. 1—9.—The oppressed righteous king.** It is the king who speaks, whose cause is identical with that of the people. Difference between this and the twenty-sixth psalm. The ground-thought of both is that God will not involve in the same outward fate those who are inwardly different; and that the lot of the wicked cannot be the same as that of the righteous. But *there* it is the oppressed *individual righteous man* that speaks; *here* it is the *oppressed righteous king* speaking for himself and his people.

**I. THE PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE.** (Vers. 1—3.) Arguments of the psalmist why God should answer him. 1. *The certain, firm faithfulness of God.* "God was his Rock." God and he were friends, and he could not but listen to the cry of a *friend* for help. Besides, God has promised to deliver the righteous out of his troubles. We have this assurance in the gospel. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." 2. *If God did not answer him, he would soon be past deliverance.* "Like them that go down to the dead." No human help could avail him; no operation of mere natural law. God's arm must interpose for him. All real answers to prayer are *supernatural*—something above nature—from the *realm of spirit*. 3. *He lifted his hands to the place where God speaks with his people.* (See Exod. xxv. 22.) That is, he puts himself into the divinely appointed way of being heard—praying towards the mercy-seat between the cherubim. Did all he knew and could do for being answered. Have we done that? 4. *God was too just to involve him in a common fate with wicked and deceitful men.* (Ver. 3.) "Draw me not away," etc. That would not be just. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

**II. A PRAYER THAT THE WICKED MAY NOT GO UNPUNISHED.** (Vers. 4, 5.) Particularly his *enemies*. The prayer might not have been prompted by malignity. For: 1. *Their frustration might have been necessary to his deliverance.* If so, he was only crying for justice, such as we often invoke upon those guilty of injustice. "Give them according to their deeds," and let them not continue in their unrighteous courses. 2. *The prayer is followed by a prophecy of their assured doom.* Because they do not study God's righteous judgments, they fall into increasing wickedness, and make sure of being destroyed.

**III. PRAYER ANSWERED IS FOLLOWED BY CONFIDENCE AND THANKSGIVING.** 1. *The struggles of his soul have brought victory, praise, and joy.* (Vers. 6—8.) 2. *The psalmist prays that the Lord would do eternally that which he had now done.* (Ver. 9.) Would continue to do for ever the same as he had now done for him and his people.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM XXIX.

THIS is a psalm of praise to God, and at the same time one intended to comfort and cheer his people. It consists of three parts: (1) An introduction (vers. 1, 2), in which "the sons of the mighty" are called upon to praise and worship God; (2) a main body, in which the might of God is set forth by the description of a thunderstorm (vers. 3—9); and (3) an application (vers. 10, 11), in which the people are called upon to see in the power and majesty of God, as placed before them, a ground for confidence in his ability to save and protect them. The authorship of David is not questioned. The psalm forms a portion of the synagogue service on the first day of the Feast of Pentecost.

Ver. 1.—Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty; literally, *ye sons of the mighty*. It is disputed who are meant. Most commentators suggest the holy angels (Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, 'Speaker's Commentary,' 'Four Friends,' Professor Alexander, Cheyne, etc.); but some think the heathen (Michaelis, Kay); and others, the mighty ones of the earth generally (Köster), to be meant. Give unto the Lord glory and strength; i.e. praise his Name, ascribe to him glory and strength and every other excellency.

Ver. 2.—Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his Name (comp. Ps. xvi. 8); literally, *the glory of his Name*; i.e. the glory properly belonging to it. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (comp. Ps. xvi. 9). This is generally explained as an exhortation to worship God in beautiful vestments, or with all the accessories of a beautiful ceremonial; but Dr. Alexander rightly questions whether the beauty inherent in holiness itself is not meant. The apostle speaks of "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" (1 Pet. iii. 4). And in goodness and holiness of every kind there is a sweetness and grace which may well be called "beauty," seeing that it has a close analogy with the beautiful in external nature and in art. The Greeks expressed physical beauty and moral perfection by one and the same term—*τὸ καλόν*.

Ver. 3.—The voice of the Lord is upon the waters. The description of God's might in the thunderstorm now begins with one of the sudden transitions which David loves. "The voice of the Lord"—already identified with the thunder in Ps. xviii. 13—is sud-

denly heard muttering in the height of heaven, "upon the waters;" i.e. the waters stored in the clouds that float on high in the air. The God of glory—the God set forth in vers. 1, 2—thundereth. It is he himself, according to the psalmist, no minor agent. The Lord (Jehovah) is upon the many (or, great) waters (comp. Job xxxvii. 2—5 and Ps. xviii. 7—14).

Ver. 4.—The voice of the Lord is powerful; literally, *in power*, or *with power* (LXX., *ἐν ἰσχύϊ*). The voice of the Lord is full of majesty; literally, *in majesty*, or *with majesty*. Two somewhat distant crashes, each louder than the preceding one, are thought to be represented—the storm sweeping on, and gradually drawing nearer and more near.

Ver. 5.—The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars. At length down swoops the hurricane—wind and rain and forked flashes of lightning all blended together, and violently tearing through the forest. The tall cedars—the pride and glory of Syria and Palestine—are snapped like reeds, and fall in a tangled mass. The Lord, who erstwhile "planted them" (Ps. civ. 16), now breaketh the cedars of Lebanon—breaketh and destroyeth them in his fury. Such storms, though rare in Palestine and Syria, are sometimes witnessed; and descriptions have been given by travellers which bear out this one of David (comp. Wilson, 'Travels,' p. 146; Cunningham Geikie, vol. ii. pp. 57, 335; Tristram, 'Land of Israel,' pp. 40, 191, 227, etc.).

Ver. 6.—He maketh them also to skip like a calf (comp. Ps. xviii. 7). As the thunder crashes and rolls and reverberates among the mountains, it seems as though the mountains themselves shook, and were moved from their places. This is expressed with extreme vividness, though no doubt with truly Oriental hyperbole, in the present passage. Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn; rather, *like a young wild ox*. Lebanon and Sirion, or Hermon (Deut. iii. 9), are the two principal mountains of Palestine, Hermon being visible throughout almost the whole extent of the Holy Land, and Lebanon enjoying a commanding position beyond Galilee to the north. The storm which shook these lofty mountain-tracts would indeed be a manifestation of power.

Ver. 7.—The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire; rather, *the voice of the Lord heweth out flames of fire*. The poet describes the appearances of things, not the actual reality. To him it seems as if the thunder, rolling along the sky, hewed out

a chasm in the clouds, from which the forked lightning issued.

Ver. 8.—The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; yea, the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. Kadesh seems to be mentioned as lying at the opposite extremity of Palestine from Lebanon and Hermon, so that the storm is made, by a magnificent hyperbole, to extend over the entire Holy Land, from the far north to the extreme south, and to embrace at once the lofty mountain-chains which are rather Syrian than Palestinian, the hills and valleys of Palestine proper, and the arid region of the south where Judæa merges into Arabia.

Ver. 9.—The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve. Plutarch says, "Shepherds accustom their flocks in a thunderstorm to keep together, and put their heads in the same direction; for such as are left alone and separated from the rest through terror cast their young" ("Sympos.", Quæst. ii.). And Pliny, "Solitary sheep cast their lambs in thunderstorms; the remedy is to keep the flock together, since it helps them to have company." A traveller in South Africa observes, "In Bechuanaland, when there are heavy thunderstorms, the antelopes flee in consternation; and the poor Bechuanaas start off on the morning following such a storm in quest of the young which have been cast through horror" (see Moffat's 'South Africa,' quoted by Dr. Kay, in his 'Commentary on the Psalms,' p. 93). And discovereth the forests; or, *strippeth the forests*. Denudes them of their leaves and branches. And in his temple doth every one speak of his glory; i.e. his grand

temple, or palace (*heykal*), of heaven and earth. In this temple "every one," or rather *everything*, all that is in it, is continually speaking of his glory (literally, "says, Glory!").

Ver. 10.—The Lord sitteth upon the flood. Most moderns translate, "*The Lord sat (as King) at the flood.*" and understand by "the Flood" the great Noachian Deluge (Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, Kay, Revised Version). Some, however, regard this as a forced and unnatural interpretation (Bishop Horsley, 'Four Friends,' 'Speaker's Commentary'), and think the flood accompanying the storm just described (vera. 3—9), or floods and inundations generally, to be meant. It is difficult to decide between the two interpretations. Yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. As God has sat as King in the past, whether at the great Deluge or at any other flood or floods, so will he ever "sit as King" in the future.

Ver. 11.—The Lord will give strength unto his people. The Lord, who shows his strength in the thunderstorm, will be able, and assuredly will be willing, to "give strength to his people"—to impart to them some of that power and might which he so abundantly possesses. Then they, partaking in his strength, need not fear the attacks of any adversaries. Struggle and contention will, by his good providence, be one day brought to an end; and ultimately the Lord will bless his people with peace—will give them the "rest which remaineth to the people of God" (Heb. iii. 9), the perfect peace which "passeth all understanding" (Phil. iv. 7).

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—"*The beauty of holiness.*" To every devout Israelite Jerusalem was "the perfection of beauty," "the joy of the whole earth" (Pss. xlviii. 2; l. 2); because the temple of the Lord was there. Its gorgeous ritual, white-robed priests and Levites, choral psalms, clangour of trumpets, harps, cymbals, all seemed the highest ideal of worship, the very visible "beauty of holiness." To all this we may well see an allusion in these words. Hence the Revisers put in the margin, "holy array;" and some even render, "holy vestments." But the Hebrew word is not "vestments," but "splendour" or "majestic adornment." And it is not to priests and Levites these words are spoken, but to angels (ver. 1; Ps. lxxxix. 6); and in Ps. xcvi. 9 to the "kindreds of the people" (Revised Version), *q.d.* all the families of mankind. Therefore we recognize a higher, more spiritual meaning, of which all the glory of temple-worship was a faint shadow. To perceive "the beauty of holiness," we must first know what holiness really means.

I. WHAT IS HOLINESS? The Bible gives a triple answer—three steps, from the lowest to the loftiest views, from ritual to spiritual, from spiritual to Divine. Holiness is (1) consecration to God; (2) likeness to God; (3) God's own nature. 1. *Consecration—dedication, or devotion to God.* In this sense, things, places, times, ceremonies, as well as persons, are continually spoken of in the Old Testament as "holy to the Lord." The ground round the burning bush was holy (Exod. iii. 5), as long as God's

presence was manifested there. So was the place where, for the time, the tabernacle was pitched. When the bush ceased to burn; when the cloud rose from the tabernacle, and Israel marched to a new resting-place,—the wild creatures roamed over those spots as common ground. The notion of *indelible sanctity* communicated by ceremonies is foreign to the Bible; things, places, etc., were holy because actually employed in God's service. No pains were spared to impress the idea that nothing is too pure or good to give to God. The victims must be without blemish; vessels, of precious material and perfect workmanship; bread, unleavened; altar, built of whole stones; priests, free from all bodily defect; the very clothes of worshippers washed clean. Yet upon the tabernacle, the vessels, the priests, the people, must be sprinkled the blood of atonement. The lesson was that even our holiness is stained with sin in God's all-searching eyes (Heb. ix. 14, 23; x. 19; 1 John i. 7—9). 2. *Likeness to God is the higher, deeper view of holiness*, to which all these forms of outward holiness were designed to lead. Before a single rite was enacted, or Aaron consecrated, the people were told to be "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6). Again and again, like a trumpet-peal or a minster bell, sounds out the great command, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." The teaching of the New Testament cannot go beyond this (1 Pet. i. 16). There are those who tell us that the Old Testament ideas of holiness were not moral or spiritual, but ritual and external. This text confutes them. Could any Israelite be so dull as not to see that all this outward ceremonial was meant to inspire deep reverence, profound worship, in thinking and speaking of God, and drawing men to him; but that God's holiness which he was bidden to imitate, must be personal purity, righteousness, goodness; and that to be truly holy, we must be like God (comp. Isa. vi. 1—6)? 3. Therefore our highest idea of holiness is this—*it is God's own character*. Thought cannot soar above this. *Uninspired* human thought has never risen so high. The Bible idea of *Divine holiness*—perfect moral and spiritual excellence—as much excels all heathen religious teaching as noontide, twilight. It is summed up in 1 John i. 5; iii. 8.

II. THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS MUST, LIKE TRUE HOLINESS ITSELF, BE SPIRITUAL, INWARD. Yet also manifest; for beauty is something we can behold, if not with the eyes, with the mind. Not a beauty *we confer*, by clothing, adorning, materializing the spiritual; but a beauty *it confers* on us, by purifying and exalting. If the heart be consecrated, the life that flows from it will be beautiful. All the outward beauty of God's works is a parable of loveliness of character and soul. Sunbeams are not so bright as loving smiles; the rose and the lily are less fair than modesty and innocence; the gorgeous sunset less grandly beautiful than the calm evening of a holy life.

REMARKS. 1. The perfect "beauty of holiness" is seen in the Lord Jesus; at once the *Revelation* and the *Reflection* of God's character in human nature—"Immanuel." 2. This beauty can be truly seen only by those whose eyes are opened (John i. 14 contrasted with Isa. liii. 27). 3. The life of every Christian *ought to be beautiful*. (Matt. v. 16.)

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The glorious sceptre of universal power*. There are many productions of poets and poetesses, celebrating the grandeur of nature, and the glory of God as manifested in the works of his hands; but there are none which, even in a poetical point of view, surpass those in Job xxvi., xxviii., xxxviii.; Isa. xl.; Pss. civ., xix., cxlvii., and that in the psalm before us now, which rises to the very noblest heights of Hebrew poetry, in its symmetry and grandeur. Bishop Perowne (who acknowledges his obligations to Ewald therein) has a most interesting introduction to this psalm, in which he points out the beauty of its structure, as in its grand description of a tempest it shows the storm at its height of majesty, and then in its subsidence to comparative calm. And, verily, even on this lower ground of poetic beauty, he would be by no means to be envied who could read it without a strange commingling of rapture, wonder, and awe. We seem to hear the roll of the ocean, to listen to the pealing thunder, to watch the flash of the lightning, the crashing of the trees of the forest, the heaving of the mountains, as if they were loosed from their foundations by an earthquake, Lebanon

and Sirion<sup>1</sup> leaping as wild creatures free from all restraint. But while it is to the descriptions of all this grandeur and majesty that some expositors chiefly call our attention, neither nature's grandeur nor majesty is the main topic of the psalm. By no means; but rather *the glory of HIM whose dominion extendeth over all!* In the eye of the psalmist, all the forces of nature are under one sceptre; that sceptre is wielded by one hand; that hand is moved by one heart, even that of our redeeming God. Such is the theme before us.<sup>2</sup>

I. HERE POWER IN VARIED MANIFESTATIONS IS TRACED TO ONE SOURCE. There are five thoughts which are presented cumulatively. 1. *Power in nature's works and wonders* specially as shown in storm and tempest, lightning and thunder, earthquake and mountain wave. Note: The larger our knowledge of natural science, the more capable shall we be of discoursing with interest, delight, and profit to others on these "wonderful works of God."<sup>3</sup> 2. *Power in providential administration.* (Ver. 10.) "The Lord sat enthroned at the flood." This word rendered "flood" is the one applied to the Deluge of Noah, and *only* so applied. Hence it seems to include the specific thought that over and above all merely natural disclosures of power, there is a moral enthronement, whereby natural phenomena are made subservient to moral ends. Not only is every atom kept in harness, but the collocation of atoms is subsidiary to the discipline of souls. 3. *There is gracious loving-kindness towards his own people.* (Ver. 11.) "His people." There are those in the world marked off from the rest by tokens known to God alone. They are his, having "made a covenant with him by sacrifice" (Ps. l. 5). And with reference to them, there is a grace marvellous in its tenderness. The same Being who can thunder most loudly can also whisper most sweetly, and can also give out blessings to his own. (1) Strength (cf. Isa. xl. 31; 2 Cor. xii. 9; Ps. xxvii. 14). (2) Peace. While the fiercest storm is raging without, God can and does give us peace within; a peace which becomes richer and fuller, till it is exceedingly abundant "above all we can ask or think." It is "the peace of God, passing all understanding" (John xiv. 27; Phil. iv. 6, 7; Rom. v. 1; Eph. ii. 14). 4. *He who thus rules in nature, providence, grace, is the everlasting King.* (Ver. 10.) "King for ever!" The sceptre of universal power will never drop from his hands, nor will he ever transfer it to another (Ps. xcvi. 1). The hand that upholds all will never become weary. The eye that watches all will never droop with fatigue. The arms that clasp believers in their embrace will never relax their hold. The voice that whispers, "Peace!" will never be stilled in death. The love that enriches with blessing will never be chilled. "King for ever!" 5. *He who is this everlasting King is our redeeming God.* The usual term for God as the God of nature is "Elohim" (Gen. i. 1). But here we are reminded that the God who thunders in the heavens and controls the swelling seas; that he who guides the forked lightning, is "Jehovah," the "I am that I am," the Lord who has thus revealed himself to his people as *their God*. And the great Ruler of nature is he who exercises loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment in the earth, in order that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord.

II. SUCH THOUGHTS OF GOD MAY WELL EVOKE GRATEFUL SONG. They know not how much of gladness and inspiration they lose who cannot see God everywhere. To see law everywhere and God nowhere would be enough to crush us. To see God everywhere working by law inspires rest and joy: our "Father is at the helm." Note: Since we have such disclosures of God, we have: 1. *Unity in diversity.* The seemingly complicated question of "the origin of force"<sup>4</sup> is settled once for all *by the*

<sup>1</sup> "Sirion:" a proper name of the mountain-chain of Hermon among the Sidonians (Deut. iii. 9); so called from the resemblance to a breast-plate (Fürst, *sub verb.*).

<sup>2</sup> The notes of Professor Kirkpatrick on this psalm are interesting and helpful ('Cambridge Bible' series).

<sup>3</sup> The works of Professor Drummond, Dr. Hugh Macmillan, the Rev. Prebendary Reynolds, and Mr. St. Charles Mivart are charming illustrations of how Christian men may make their knowledge of natural science serve to the setting forth of the glory of God and of his truth. We purposely refrain from giving illustrations in the text of how this may be done, as the advancing sciences will each year pour floods of new light on the "wonderful works of God."

<sup>4</sup> See an able lecture on this subject by the late Sir John Herschel, in 'Familiar Lectures on Scientific Subjects,' p. 460 (Strahan).

man who sees God. And this privilege is reserved for "the pure in heart" (Matt. v. 8). 2. *Since one God is over all*, natural phenomena as well as providential incident may be made fuel for the religious life. A thunderstorm may aid worship. 3. *Since one Being is the Origin of all kinds of force, prayer for natural blessings and temporal mercies is perfectly reasonable*; e.g. prayer for rain. It is quite true that prayer and rain lie in totally distinct spheres.<sup>1</sup> But since the same Being who hears one sends the other, the spheres find their unity at his throne. 4. *Since the God who governs all is One whom we know, we may read and sing of glory under all circumstances and everywhere.* (Ver. 9.) "In his temple every whit of it uttereth glory;" or, "In his temple every one says, Glory!" Yes; we may triumph everywhere since our God is "King for ever!" 5. *Holy awe may well combine with triumph, and loyalty with praise.* For God "sits enthroned"—such is the sublime figure suggested here. And "his people" though we are by grace, his absolute sovereignty must never be forgotten by us (ver. 2); ever must we give unto the Lord "the glory due unto his Name,"<sup>2</sup> and "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"—in holy attire, even in the "fine linen which is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. xix. 8), "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. x. 22). 6. *Amid all natural convulsions and national upheavings, let confidence and hope remain undisturbed.* "King for ever!" Then, however gloomy the outlook of events, nothing can happen beyond the bounds of Divine control, nothing which he cannot make subservient to the inbringing of his everlasting kingdom. "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Ps. xli. 2).—C.

Vers. 1—11.—*The works and the Word of God* should not be separated. They are both revelations, and the one is necessary to the right interpretation of the other. If we study God's works by themselves, we are apt to forget God's Word, and so forget God himself. If, on the other hand, we confine ourselves to God's Word, we are in danger of falling into a similar error—that of forgetting God's presence in his works, and so turning the world without us into a world without God. The psalmist shows us a more excellent way. "The occasion of this psalm is a thunderstorm; but it does not limit itself to the external natural phenomenon, but in it perceives the self-attestation of the God of redemptive history" (Delitzsch). If Ps. viii. should be read at night when the sky is bright with stars, and Ps. xix. by day when the sun is high in the heavens, this should be studied in the gloom of the storm, when the lightnings flash and the thunders roll, and the terrors of the Lord are on every side. It is then we can realize its deep grandeur and beauty, and feel its power to bring us nearer God. 1. The first thing is that we should take the *right standpoint*. "Not to the earth confined ascend to heaven." We must rise above the things seen, above the various forces working around us, above the mere reasonings and imaginations of our own hearts. We must take our place by the side of the highest, "the God-like ones," "the sons of the mighty"—the angels, who are in truest sympathy with God. It is as we hear with their ears, and see with their eyes, and enter into fellowship with them in mind and spirit, that we can truly behold Jehovah's glory, and fitly sing his praise (ver. 1). 2. The true spirit with which to contemplate the magnificent spectacle is reverence and trust (ver. 2). Thus prepared, we are able to *recognize God's presence*. A "voice" implies a speaker. Behind all the glory of visible and natural things there is the glory of God. He is the Force of all forces, and the Life of all life. The man of science may see nothing in the thunderstorm but cold material law, and the savage may recognize only a mysterious power which fills his soul with fear and trembling; but if we are of the same spirit as the psalmist, we can rise from the seen to the unseen, and acknowledge the presence and the glory of God. 3. Further, we are able to confess with humility and awe the *supreme majesty of God*. The storm in progress witnesses to his eternal power and Godhead. We behold his glory as the

<sup>1</sup> See articles on 'The Function of Prayer in the Economy of the Universe,' by Rev. Wm. Knight, Dundee, in *Contemporary Review*, January and December, 1873.

<sup>2</sup> The psalmist is thought by some to call on the heavenly hosts to praise God (ver. 1); surely not exclusively, but rather along with the Church of God on earth (see Hengstenberg hereon, and Ps. ciii. 19—22).

Lord of heaven and earth. We see him not only as the Lord of the "waters," but of the dry land; not only of "the cedars," but of all living creatures; not only of the children of men, but of all the host of heaven (vers. 3—9). 4. Lastly, we are able to rejoice in God as our God, the supreme Object of our fear and love. The psalm ends as it began, with God. At the beginning we are raised from earth to heaven, and in the close we have heaven brought down to earth. It is as we ascend with Christ to God that God will descend with Christ to us. Thus we are enabled to confide in God as our almighty King and our gracious Redeemer. "The Lord will give strength unto his people." These are the two great blessings of salvation. "Strength" we have lost through sin; but it is recovered through Christ. God's people are strong to do, to suffer, and to endure, to overcome evil and daily to perform their vows in the service of their Lord (Phil. iv. 13). God's people have "peace"—that inner harmony and calm which results from oneness with God. Amidst all the stress and struggle of life, though there should come wars and famines and pestilences, when men's hearts are failing them for fear, they are able to say "It is the Lord!" He will keep us from evil; he will bless us with strength and with peace.—W. F.

Ver. 11.—*The priestly benediction* (Numb. vi. 22—27) may be said to be summed up in these two things, "strength" and "peace." Together they make up all that is needed for daily life. When man goes forth in the morning to his work (Ps. civ. 23), what he requires is "strength," that he may be able to do the will of God. When the evening comes, what he needs is "peace"—the rest and content of the heart in God. The two things cannot be separated. It is in the measure we use aright the "strength" God gives that we can have "peace." If we are unfaithful, if we alienate to selfish and unworthy purposes the "strength" which should have been wholly devoted to God, we mar our "peace." David has taught us the secret (Ps. cxix. 165), and David's Son and Lord has made the truth still plainer (John xv. 10). "His people." There is nothing arbitrary in this. In one sense all are God's people, for he is the Maker of all. Then in the higher sense all may become God's people if they so choose. But besides, the blessings of "strength" and "peace" can only be received by such as are in a fit state to receive them. There are blessings that are common. There are other blessings that are of a nobler kind, and are necessarily limited to those who can receive them (2 Cor. ii. 11, 12). The delights of art and science and literature are for those who have a certain preparedness. So it is in spiritual things. We must be weak before we are strong. We must be of one mind with God in Christ before we can have peace (Rom. v. 1; John xiv. 27).—W. F.

Vers. 1—11.—*The thunderstorm*. Compare this with the nineteenth and eighth psalms—all nature psalms. This is a wonderful description of a thunderstorm.

I. THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD IN NATURE INSPIRES THE DEVOUT MIND WITH THE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP. Inspires the common mind with fear. The scientific mind with inquiry. Inflames the imagination of the poetic mind. But fills the devout mind with the spirit of worship of the great invisible Creator. "Give unto the Lord the honour [or, 'glory'] due unto his Name." Every manifestation of God is interesting to the religious man.

II. THAT THE DEVOUT MAN SEEKS FOR SYMPATHY AND FELLOWSHIP IN HIS WORSHIP. (Vers. 1, 2.) He calls upon the whole invisible world of the sons of God to give glory to God in the "beauty of holiness," or in holy apparel, i.e. dressed as priests in spotless attire. 1. *Human praise is poor and inadequate*. And he would have the angelic choir give full-voiced utterance to God's glory in higher strains than he could reach. 2. *The spirit of worship brings man into closer sympathy with his fellow-man*. Hence the necessity of public worship, because all our best emotions become deepened when shared with others. We are made for fellowship in all the highest good of life.

III. THE GOD WHO IS MIGHTY IN NATURE WILL GIVE STRENGTH UNTO HIS PEOPLE. The crashing thunderstorm which awakens fear in ordinary minds awakens trust and confidence in the devout mind. 1. *He who by his might raises the storm will give strength to the weak and persecuted*. He sits above the storm, is Master and King over it; and he sits above the storms of the mind and heart, to control them. 2. *He who quells the storm is able to quell the tumults of the mind, and to give us peace*.

Christ gave his peace to the disciples; and "the peace of God which passeth all understanding is able to keep [guard] our hearts and minds." It is inward trust and rest, and not outward tranquillity.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM XXX.

THIS psalm is one of thanksgiving from first to last, and commemorates a deliverance from a great danger. It is divided into two unequal portions—one of five and the other of seven verses. In the first part, the deliverance is mentioned, and thanks given for it, in the briefest possible way (vers. 1—3), after which the people are called upon to join in praising God, and reminded what cause they have for doing so (vers. 4, 5). In the second part, the circumstances of the deliverance are set out at greater length. First of all, the sin is confessed, which had drawn down God's anger (ver. 6); then mention is made of the trouble which came (ver. 7); next the psalmist tells us how the trouble was met (ver. 8); he gives us his prayer and expostulation with God (vers. 9, 10); then he relates how, on a sudden, there was relief—grief was turned into gladness—entreaty into thanksgiving (vers. 11, 12). Finally, in a burst of joy, he promises to continue to praise and thank God for ever.

The title ascribes the psalm to David; and it is generally allowed to possess internal evidence of Davidic authorship. Ewald calls it "a model hymn of thanksgiving, composed in the best age of Hebrew poetry, for recitation in the temple." The particular occasion on which it was written is declared in the title to have been "the dedication of the house," by which (if David was the author) it is impossible to understand anything but the dedication of the altar (with its precinct) on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, after the great plague sent to punish David for numbering the people, as related in 2 Sam. xxiv. 1—25; 1 Chron. xxi. 1—28. With this occasion its contents are in perfect harmony. It was probably sung at the thanksgiving service with which David inaugurated his altar. The modern Jews still recite it at their Feast of the Dedication.

Ver. 1.—I will extol thee, O Lord; *cr.* "I will exalt thee," as the word is rendered in Pss. xxxiv. 3; xcix. 5, 9; and elsewhere. For thou hast lifted me up; or, "drawn me up," as a bucket is drawn up out of a well, or a man out of a dungeon. And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. David had still enemies at the time of his numbering the people, as appears from 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. Indeed, it was doubtless with some reference to the number of his foes that he wished to know how many followers he could rally to his standard in case of need. If the plague had continued much longer, David's military strength would have been seriously crippled, and his foes would have rejoiced with reason.

Ver. 2.—O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. "Heal" may be used metaphorically for the removal of mental sufferings (see Pss. xli. 4; cxlvii. 3); but David's grief when he saw the sufferings of his people from the plague seems to have wholly prostrated him, both in mind and body. For the nature of the "cry" spoken of, comp. vers. 8—10, which are an expansion of the present verse.

Ver. 3.—O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave; *i.e.* when I was on the verge of the grave, just ready to depart to the unseen world, thy interposition saved me, and brought me, as it were, back to life. Thou hast kept me alive. Lest the hyperbole of the preceding clause should be misunderstood, the writer appends a prosaic account of what had happened. God had "kept him alive" when he was in peril of death, and saved him, that he should not go down to the pit.

Ver. 4.—Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his. David continually calls upon the people to join him in his praises of God. Even when the meror vouchsafed has been granted specially to himself, he regards the people as interested, since he is their ruler in peace and their leader in war (see Pss. ix. 11; xxxiv. 3, etc.). On the present occasion, however, the people who had escaped the pestilence had almost exactly the same reason for praising and thanking God that David had, and were bound to join him in his thanksgiving service. And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness; literally, *give thanks to the memorial of his holiness*, which is explained, by reference to Exod. iii. 15, as meaning,



"Give thanks to his holy Name" (comp. Ps. ciii. 1; cvi. 47; cxlv. 21).

Ver. 5.—*For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life; literally, for a moment (is passed) in his anger, a lifetime in his favour.* God's anger is short-lived in the case of those who, having sinned, repent, and confess their sin, and pray for mercy (see vers. 8—10). His favour, on the contrary, is enduring; it continues all their life. Weeping may endure for a night; rather, *at eventide weeping comes to lodge, or to pass the night; but joy cometh in the morning; or, but at morn joy arriveth* (comp. Job xxxiii. 26; Isa. xxvi. 20; liv. 7).

Vers. 6—12.—Now begins the expanded account of the deliverance in respect of which the thanksgiving is offered. And first, with regard to the offence that had drawn down the Divine chastisement; it was an offence of the lips, springing from an evil temper in the heart.

Ver. 6.—*And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved; rather, as in the Revised Version, and as for me, in my prosperity I said, etc.* There is a marked pause, and introduction of a new subject in a new strophe. Prosperity had worked an ill effect on the psalmist, had made him self-confident and proud. He "said in his heart," as the wicked man in Ps. x. 6, only in still stronger phrase, "I shall not be moved;" literally, *I shall not be moved for ever.* His heart was lifted up, and in the spirit of self-glorification he gave command for the numbering of the people. The result was the plague, and the death of seventy thousand of his subjects. Into these details he does not here enter. He is content to trace his sin to its bitter root of pride, and to glance at its punishment (ver. 7) and his repentance (vers. 8—10).

Ver. 7.—*Lord, by thy favour thou hast (rather, hadst) made my mountain to stand strong. It was thy favour which had given me the "prosperity" whereby I was exalted, and which I thought rooted in myself—which had made Zion strong, and enabled me to triumph over my enemies. But, lo! suddenly all was changed—Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. God turned his face away, declared himself angry with his servant (1 Chron. xxi. 7—12), and sent the dreadful plague which in a single day destroyed seventy thousand lives. Then David, feeling that God's face was indeed turned from him, "was troubled."*

Ver. 8.—*I cried to thee, O Lord; and unto thee I made supplication* (comp. 2 Sam. xxiv. 17; 1 Chron. xxi. 17). The

part of his prayer most honourable to David is not recorded by himself, but by the historians. He tells us of his secret wrestlings with God, his complaints and expostulations—his cries and pleadings as they remained in his memory; he passes over the desire to die for his people, which the historians put on record.

Ver. 9.—*What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? What advantage wilt thou derive from my death, if thou killest me, either by the plague, which may as well fasten upon me as upon any one else, or by the misery and mental strain of seeing my subjects, my innocent sheep, suffer? God has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth" (Ezek. xviii. 32), and certainly can obtain no profit from the destruction of any of his creatures. Shall the dust praise thee? (comp. Ps. vi. 5; lxxxviii. 10; cxv. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 18). In death, so far as the power of death extends, there can be no action; the lips cease to move, and therefore cannot hymn God's praise—the "dust" is inanimate, and, while it remains dust, cannot speak. What the freed soul may do, the psalmist does not consider. Very little was known under the old dispensation concerning the intermediate state. Shall it declare thy truth? The dust certainly could not do this, unless revived and formed into another living body.*

Ver. 10.—*Hear, O Lord, and show mercy upon me: Lord, be thou my Helper* (comp. Ps. liv. 4; Heb. xiii. 6). Here the psalmist's prayer, uttered in his distress, ends, and he proceeds to declare the result.

Ver. 11.—*Thou hast turned (rather, thou turnedst) for me my mourning into dancing. Suddenly, in a moment, all was changed. The angel ceased to slay. God bade him hold his hand. The Prophet Gad was sent with the joyful news to David, and commanded him at once to build an altar at Jehovah. Then the mourning ceased, and a joyful ceremonial was instituted, of which dancing, as so often, formed a part (see Exod. xv. 20; 1 Sam. xviii. 6; 2 Sam. vi. 14—16; Ps. cxlix. 3; Jer. xxxi. 4). Thou hast put off (rather, didst put off) my sackcloth. That the king had clothed himself in sackcloth on the occasion, is mentioned by the author of Chronicles (1 Chron. xxi. 16). And girded (girdedst) me with gladness* (comp. 1 Chron. xxi. 26).

Ver. 12.—*So the end that my glory may sing praise to thee. If we allow the ellipse of the personal pronoun supposed by our translators and Revisers, we must regard David as calling his soul "his glory," as in Ps. xvi. 9. But some commentators think that "glory" is here used as we use "royalty," and designates the*

royal person or the royal office (so Kay and Professor Alexander). And not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever. Great mercies deserve perpetual remembrance. David regarded

the mercy at this time vouchsafed him as one which, like that vouchsafed Hezekiah required to be commemorated "all the days of his life" (Isa. xxxviii. 20).

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 5.—*Mercy and judgment.* "His anger . . . a moment," etc. This pathetic and beautiful psalm is a thanksgiving after dangerous, well-nigh fatal, sickness. Its title calls it "a song at the dedication of the house; by David" (see Revised Version), *q.d.* David's own palace, not the temple. But there is no reference to this in the psalm. This is of small account. The most profitable study of Scripture is not *telescopic*, peering into the past; nor *microscopic*, dissecting it like a corpse; but *stethoscopic*, laying your ear against its heart, and discerning the life that throbs there. The psalmist sings "of mercy and judgment."

I. GOD'S DISPLEASURE, AND ITS BRIEF DURATION. There is nothing of which we need to speak more carefully and reverently than of God's anger. With men, anger is rarely free from personal resentment, ill will, injustice, passion. None of these find place in God's anger. It is righteous displeasure against sin. At bottom, it is a manifestation of his love, which desires his children to be holy and happy. Its reality is shown, from the dawn of man's history, by the inseparable connection of suffering with sin (Rom. vi. 23). God loves sinners, though they are unworthy, but does not treat them as sinless. And "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." The chastening may be brief, "for a moment," but it is the expression of his unchangeable opposition to sin. The lightning flash is the expression of eternal forces, unchangeable laws. Are, then, the troubles of Christians always of the nature of punishments for particular sins? Beware of hastily thinking so, for yourself or others. Trouble has another mission, discipline—the training and culture of Christian character. The Sinless One himself learned in the school of sorrow (Heb. v. 8, 9; iv. 15). Thus we learn to "weep with those who weep." But trouble *may* be the direct fruit of our sin; or sent to waken conscience—bring sin to mind. If so, remember there is no truer exercise of God's love (Ps. cxix. 67).

II. GOD'S FAVOUR, AND ITS LIFE-GIVING POWER. The Hebrew seems hardly to bear the sense given in the margin of the Revised Version. "Lifetime" is rather an English than a Hebrew idea. God's favour—his loving-kindness and faithful care—is as truly exercised towards his children in adversity as in prosperity; but not so *seen* and *felt*. The clouds which hide the sun are really drawn up by the sun's rays, that they may "break in blessing;" but for the time they do hide it. The sense of God's favour—the assurance of forgiveness, answer to prayer, removal of trial, opening of the path, comfort of promises, bounty of providence, shedding abroad of love in the heart by his Spirit, is like the life-giving sunshine; "clear shining after rain."

III. THE LAW OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE CONCERNING TROUBLE. Sorrow is joy's forerunner. The Hebrew is very terse and vigorous, though it may sound harsh if Englished *verbatim*, "For there is a moment in his anger; life in his favour. At eventide weeping shall come to lodge; and at morn a shout of joy." Trouble is not *for trouble's sake*, but "for our profit." The end being gained, the process will cease (1 Pet. i. 7; 2 Cor. iv. 17). Joy is *for its own sake*; therefore inexhaustible (Isa. xxxv. 10; liv. 8). How if the process fails; the end is not gained; grace and chastening both in vain? Then "his anger" against sin cannot be "for a moment," but must abide (John iii. 36; Heb. vi. 8; x. 26, 27).

Ver. 9.—*A noble view of life.* "Shall the dust praise thee?" etc. We must not take this cry of bitter anguish as an utterance of unbelief or irreligion. On the contrary, it contains a noble and religious view of life. Life, in the psalmist's view, is a scene and season in which to glorify God. His quarrel with death is that it cuts short this opportunity; silences the tongue of testimony and the lips of praise; arrests the busy worker, and buries his vigorous energies in the dust. Here, then, is—

I. THE CHURCH'S COMPLAINT AGAINST DEATH. There is no piety in ignoring

mysteries, though there may be impiety either in our presumptuous attempts to explain them, or more presumptuous denials that there can be an explanation perfectly consistent with God's wisdom, justice, and goodness. We must not rashly try to lift the veil or rend it; but as we worship before it we feel that it is a veil (Isa. xlv. 15). God is a Sovereign, but not a Tyrant. Absolute obedience and trust are his due; but he will not crush either our reason or our conscience (Jer. xii. 1). Among the imperishable monuments which the Bible has placed over the graves of the good and wise and faithful, are not only those of such as were garnered like the ripe shock; but of others who came forth as a flower, and were cut down; not only Abraham, Israel, David, Daniel; but Abel, Josiah, Stephen, James. Such cases are not rare exceptions, but so frequent in every age of the Church's history as to suggest the thought that there must be some deep, permanent, prevailing reason why so many priceless lives are cut short in their prime, and the Church of Christ and the world made poor by the loss of such vast stores of unspent service.

II. THE ENIGMA OF LIFE. For those who reject the gospel—the insoluble enigma. Close your Bible. Suppose, in the history of our race, no Incarnation, no Atonement, no Resurrection; in our calendar, no Christmas, Good Friday, Easter. Then, what is human life? A vast funeral procession; not in ordered march, with the gray heads always in the van. A confused blind hurry, in which not one of the crowd can tell but the next step may be into darkness and dust. Now the babe is snatched, now the mother. The child in his play, the youth in his pride and hope, the bride with her wreath; the man of ripe power and rich experience, whose fall is like Samson's, bringing down the pillars on which the house rested. *What does it mean?* There are those who try to borrow the moral force and motive power of Christianity, while rejecting its facts, who are ready with an answer. "Man," they say, "is immortal in his work. All that is best of us survives." No more, we reply, than what is worst. "The evil that men do lives after them." Noblest enterprises are rudely made abortive by death. The statesman, reformer, philanthropist (as dying Mirabeau said), cannot "bequeath his head" (Job xiv. 19, last clause).

III. THE GOSPEL SUPPLIES THE KEY TO THE ENIGMA, THE REPLY TO THE QUESTION. Yes. The dust shall praise God; the grave does declare his truth. 1. From the open, empty tomb of Jesus comes the message of comfort, hope, life. Death is abolished (2 Tim. i. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 20). 2. Every Christian grave praises God, bearing witness to the faith which conquered death and robbed the grave of terror (Ps. xliii. 4; 2 Cor. v. 1, 6); in the recognition and comfort of Christian mourners (1 Thess. v. 13); in the promise of the Lord (John vi. 39; Rev. i. 18). Patience! "Fear not, only believe." The promise shall be fulfilled. Death shall be destroyed (John v. 28, 29; Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Cor. xv. 52, 53, 55).

Meantime, who can doubt that the work which seems to us often so roughly and untimely broken off, is but raised to a higher sphere? They who seem to enter into rest before their time do so because the Lord has made their place ready (John xiv. 2).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*A public thanksgiving on recovery from sickness.* This psalm has a remarkable title, "A Psalm or Song at the dedication of the house of David." What house is referred to we have no means of knowing, nor is there any very manifest relation between the contents of the psalm and the dedication of any house whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> We can scarcely read the psalm carefully without gathering therefrom that the writer had had a dangerous illness, from which he was not expecting to recover. But his life was mercifully spared; and we may venture to gather also (by comparing the title of the psalm with ver. 3) that his recovery, and the dedication referred to nearly coincided in point of time; and that he piously resolved to avail himself of

<sup>1</sup> Delitzsch has most serviceable remarks hereon in his introduction to this psalm. Mr. Fausset's study on this psalm is most instructive, 'Horeæ Psalmicæ,' pp. 138—141. Kirkpatrick's introduction and notes, in the 'Cambridge Bible' series, will repay careful attention, as will Dr. Green's note on ver. 5.

such dedication service to return thanks for his recovery. This supposition is in itself reasonable, and, so far as we can find, it is not inconsistent with any of the expressions in the psalm itself. We find herein an interesting blending of the psalmist's inner thoughts and of his pleadings with God. We see from both, how the Old Testament saints were wont to think and pray concerning sickness and death; both in thought and prayer we find here a decided reflection of the incompleteness of revelation under the Mosaic economy, and therefore, as Christians, privileged with fuller light and larger truth, we shall be greatly to blame if we look at either affliction or death as gloomily as the psalmist did. At the same time, the varied stages of experience indicated here are so very frequently passed through, even now, that we may serviceably utilize this psalm for the purposes of studying the dealings of God with his saints in the olden time, and in the present time likewise. There are *six stages of experience rehearsed at this dedication service*.

I. FIRST STAGE: TRANQUILLITY. (Ver. 6.) "In mea tranquillitate" (Buxtorf and Calvin). There had been a time, prior to the experience of trouble here recorded, in which the writer had enjoyed comparative rest for a while. Some such interval of quiet is named in 2 Sam. vii. 1 (see also 2 Sam. xiii. 14, 15). And while he was calm and prosperous, he began to reckon securely on the future. He said, "I shall never be moved." We have no reason to think this was a sinful self-security, as one expositor intimates; for in the text we are told that David attributed his ease to God's good grace and favour. But, not unnaturally, he took it for granted that such quiet would last. God had made his "mountain" of prosperity to stand so firmly that it did not then seem as if he would again be seriously disturbed. Note: There is not only a sinful self-security into which the saints may fall for a while, but there is also a thoughtless assumption which may fasten on us in times of ease, that things will remain calm and smooth. There is danger in this, however, if not sin. And it is more than likely that God will send us something to disturb our treacherous calm. Hence—

II. SECOND STAGE: TROUBLE. (Ver. 7, latter part.) The references in the psalm show us what this trouble was; we can scarcely question that it was some dangerous illness, in which his life was very seriously threatened (cf. vers. 2, 3, 8, 9). And he attributed this illness to, or at least he associated it with, the "hiding of God's face." There is no necessary connection between these two. If, indeed, spiritual pride and a careless walk have sullied our life, there will be a time of mental darkness and serious spiritual depression afterwards. And not only so; but there are some diseases in which equanimity is so perturbed that spiritual distress may attend on bodily weakness through unbingement of the nervous system; and, subjectively, the effect may be *as if* God's face were hidden. The connection of bodily suffering with mental gloom was not understood in David's time, nor indeed till very recently. In the lives of Brainerd and other saints of their day, it is clear that a morbid introspection led them to associate the depression caused by fluctuating bodily health with corresponding spiritual ill. But we ought now to understand better both the laws of health and the love of God. So far from bodily affliction being a sign of "the hiding of God's face," God himself is never nearer, and his love is never more tender, than in our times of suffering and distress. A dear friend who was seriously ill said to the writer one day, "Oh! I'm so weak, I cannot think, I cannot even pray!" We replied, "Your little Ada was very ill some time ago, was she not?" "Very." "Was she not too ill to speak to you?" "Yes." "Did you love her less because she could not speak to you?" "No! I think I loved her more, if there was any difference." "Just so," was the reply. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." We must never associate trouble and sickness, *per se*, with "the hiding of God's face."<sup>1</sup> But David's trouble, and his views thereof, led to the—

III. THIRD STAGE: PRAYER. And the prayer was woeful indeed. He thought he was going down to the grave—to Sheol (Hebrew), to Hades (LXX.), *i.e.* to the dim and drear underworld of the departed.<sup>2</sup> There are three views of the state immediately

<sup>1</sup> In the second half of the fifth verse, *weeping* is personified, and represented by the figure of a wanderer, who leaves, in the morning, the lodging into which he had entered the preceding evening. After him, another guest arrives, *viz.* joy (Hengstenberg).

<sup>2</sup> See the remarks of the present writer on Rev. i. 18, in that volume of the 'Pulpit Commentary.'

after death, which is intended by the terms above named, which carry with them no moral significance, unless such moral significance is conveyed by the connection in which they stand. "Sheol" denotes the realm of departed souls, looked at as the all-demanding world. "Hades" denotes the realm of departed souls, looked at as the unknown region. To the pagan world, Hades was all dark, and no light beyond. To the Hebrews it was a dim, shadowy realm, with light awaiting the righteous in the morning (cf. Pss. xvii. 15; xlix. 14). To the Christian it is neither dark nor dim, but something "very far better"—it is being "with Christ." Hence it follows that such a moan as that in ver. 9 would be utterly out of place now; "dying" to a believer is not "going down to the pit," and ought not to be thought of as such. The tenth verse can never be inappropriate. But note: 1. Times of anxiety and trouble often bring out agonizing prayer. 2. We may pour forth all our agonies before God. We speak to One who will never misunderstand, and who will do for us "above all that we ask or think." Hence we are not surprised to see the psalmist at a—

IV. FOURTH STAGE: RECOVERY.<sup>1</sup> (Ver. 11; also ver. 1, "Thou hast lifted me up;"<sup>2</sup> ver. 2, "Thou hast healed me.") The psalmist was restored, and permitted again to sing of recovering mercy. Note: Whatever means may be used in sickness, it is only by the blessing of God thereon that they are efficacious. Therefore he should be praised for his goodness and loving-kindness therein.

V. FIFTH STAGE: THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE. (Ver. 5.) When the trouble is over, what seemed so prolonged a period before dwindles in the review to "a moment." There is a beautiful antithesis, moreover, in the fifth verse, which our Revisers have too cautiously put in the margin, "His anger is but for a moment; his favour is for a lifetime." Bishop Perowne says, "חַמַּדִּים seems here to be used of *duration* of life, though it would be difficult to support the usage."<sup>3</sup> But even if the word may not be used of the *duration* of life, surely it is used of life in reference to its continuousness, as in Pss. xxi. 5 and lxiii. 5; and so is in complete antithesis to "a moment." We should render the text, "For a moment in his anger, life in his favour." (Even here, however, we must beware of always associating sickness with the anger of God.) How gloriously true it is, "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever" (Ps. ciii. 9, 10; Isa. lvii. 16—18)! We may not only praise God that our joys vastly outnumber our sorrows, but also that oftentimes our sorrows become the greatest mercies of all. Thus we are brought in thought to the—

VI. SIXTH STAGE: VOW. (Ver. 12, "O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.") Many illustrations are to be found in the Word of God, of vows following on the reception of special mercies from him (Gen. xxviii. 20—22; 1 Sam. i. 11; Pss. cxvi., cxxxii. 2). Note: At each instance of signal mercy in life, there should be as signal a repetition of our consecration vows.—C.

Vers. 1—12.—*God's chastening hand.* It is written, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 11). This psalm teaches how we may reap much good from the chastening of sickness.

I. The first thing is to ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S HAND. The heathen may be in doubt; they may question whether it is "a chance" or the doing of God when great evil comes (1 Sam. vi. 9); but it ought not to be so with us. Behind the things seen, and all the causes we can trace, we should see the hand of God. "Thou hast lifted me up." What a blessed change this thought effects! It is like light breaking in on the darkness, and the sense of a loving presence bringing hope to our hearts in trouble.

II. Again, we should CONFESS GOD'S MERCY. However bad our case may be, it

<sup>1</sup> Both terms in ver. 11 (שָׁחַל וּמָחַל) convey the thought of a more demonstrative emotion than is usual now in such cases.

<sup>2</sup> "Hast drawn me up, as out of a dungeon" (Rogers).

<sup>3</sup> It is questionable whether the word קָבוֹד does not refer to the glory of God; if so the word "my" is redundant and misleading (see Perowne and Hengstenberg hereon).

<sup>4</sup> "If they weigh his *anger* and his *favour* in an equal balance, they will always find it verified, that while the former is but for a moment, the latter continues to the end of life" (Calvin; also see Dr. Green and Kirkpatrick hereon).

might be worse. "Wherefore doth a living man complain—a man for the punishment of his sins?" (Lam. iii. 39; cf. Micah vii. 9). Besides, there are alleviations. We meet with kindness and sympathy; we are cheered by the ministry of loving friends; we have the teaching and experiences of other sufferers open to us in books; above all, we have the consolations of our holy religion.

III. Again, it is meet that we should SEEK TO KNOW GOD'S WILL. He does not act from passion or caprice. He has a purpose, and his purpose must be worthy of himself, as well as benign and gracious toward us. We know as a general truth that "the will of God is our sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 3). But we should inquire, besides, as to what special end God may have in view in the particular trial that has come to us. It may be he wishes to teach us the brevity of life. "Work, therefore, while it is called to-day" (John ix. 4). Or his object may be to humble our hearts and to quicken our sympathies with others. "Look not, therefore, on your own things, but look also on the things of others" (Phil. ii. 4). Or his purpose may be to loosen us from earthly things, and to bind us more closely to himself as our Saviour and our God. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John v. 21). In any case, like Job, let us say, "That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (Job xxxiv. 32; cf. Josh. vii. 6).

IV. Again, we should pray that we may be able to SURRENDER OURSELVES WHOLLY TO GOD. "The hardest, the severest, the last lesson which man has to learn upon this earth is submission to the will of God. It is the hardest lesson, because to our blinded eyesight it often seems a cruel will. It is the severest, because it can be only taught by the blighting of much that has been most dear; it is the last lesson, because when a man has learned that, he is fit to be transplanted from a world of wilfulness to a world in which one will alone is loved and done. All that saintly experience ever had to teach resolves itself into this—the lesson how to say affectionately, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (F. W. Robertson). When we have learned this lesson, then we are able to see with thankfulness and joy that God's holiness and love are one (ver. 4). Besides, we have reached a height which, looking before and after, we recognize the gracious dealings of God with us all through, and are able to say that it was good for us to have been afflicted (vers. 6—12). Perhaps, like the psalmist, we may have been falling into carnal security. We have said to ourselves, "I shall never be moved." Our presumption has brought upon us chastisement. We presumed upon our health, and God sent sickness; we presumed upon our friends and lovers, and God has put them far from us; we presumed upon our reputation and worldly comforts, and God has brought us low; we presumed upon our religious faith and privileges, and God has hid his face from us, and taught us that we must rely only on himself. Our trials have moved us to prayer (vers. 8—10); our prayer has brought us help and comfort from God (ver. 11), and now with renewed hope and joy we can sing God's praise (ver. 12).—W. F.

Ver. 4.—*The holiness of Christ.* We may apply these words to Christ. We should "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness" as—

I. GLORIOUSLY INDEPENDENT. The holiness of the creature is derived. It is not by will, or by effort, or by discipline as something that has been wrought out by himself; it is of God. But the holiness of Christ was his own; it was essential to his being; it was the outshining of the glory that he had from eternity (Isa. vi. 3; John xii. 41).

II. ABSOLUTELY PERFECT. Thank God, there have been, and there are, good men upon earth; but none of them is perfect. None is good from the first; none is wholly and always good. The holiness of the best is not only derived, but imperfect. This is the confession of every one that is godly when coming before God. But the holiness of Christ was perfect. Nothing could be added to it—nothing higher could be conceived. In this respect he stands alone, the first, and the last, and the only one, in human likeness, who had kept the Law perfectly, and who could say, in the face of enemies and of friends, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John viii. 46).

III. INVOLABLY PURE. Some may seem pure because they have not been tried. But Christ was subjected to the severest trials and temptations; yet his holy soul was never stained by sin. He was born without sin (Luke i. 35); he lived in an evil

world without sin (1 John iii. 5); he died without sin (Heb. ix. 14). "Such an High Priest became us" (Heb. vii. 26).

IV. **ETERNALLY BEAUTIFUL.** We read of "the beauty of holiness," and it is the supreme and perfect beauty of character. 1. Challenges our admiration. 2. Inspires our confidence. 3. Commands our love. Christ's holiness is not against us, but for us. It does not repel, but attract; it shows us what we ought to be, and thus humbles us under a sense of our sins; it shows us what we may become, and thus raises our hopes to heaven. It is because of his holiness he is fitted to be our Saviour. He not only perfectly represents God to man, but also man to God. Never was it more needful than in our day to remember Christ's holiness. Men are ready enough to speak of Christ's truth, Christ's goodness, Christ's self-sacrifice, and so forth; but few speak of his holiness. But in the Old Testament and the New holiness has a first place. Our Lord addressed God as "Holy Father" (John xvii. 11). He has taught us that without holiness no one shall see God; and he, and he alone, reveals to us the way whereby we who are sinners may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in God's fear. It is as we become holy that we grow up into Christ, to the stature of the perfect man. It is as we are holy that we can best serve Christ here, and sing his praise for ever (1 Pet. i. 15; ii. 5; Rev. iv. 8; xiv. 3).—W. F.

Vers. 5—12.—*The changes and consolations of life.* I. **THE CHANGES OF LIFE.** Health may give place to sickness, prosperity to adversity, joy to sorrow. To-day we may be lifted up and rejoicing in God's favour, to-morrow we may be cast down and in trouble because God is hiding his face from us. There are two things to be guarded against. First, *presumption* (ver. 6); next, *despair*. Come what will, we must cling to God (vers. 9, 10).

II. **THE CONSOLATIONS OF LIFE.** 1. All changes are under the control of God. 2. That God's help is always available. Nothing can really prevent us from enjoying God's presence, but our own sin. 3. That the end of the Lord is merciful. The blessing will surely come to those who wait for it. "Anger" will give place to "favour;" the pain of the "moment" will be forgotten in the joy of renewed "life" and the ushering in of the glad eternal "day." The end is "praise."—W. F.

Vers. 1—5.—*The mercy of God.* This psalm composed after recovery from some chastisement for sin, which had very nearly proved fatal. He praises God for lifting him up out of it, and calls upon others of a similar experience to join him in his thanksgiving.

I. **HE CELEBRATES WITH JOY THE MERCY OF GOD TO HIM.** 1. *His recovery had put an end to the malicious exultation of his foes.* (Ver. 1.) Wicked men rejoice in the downfall and calamity of the good; they accept it as a sign of hypocrisy and of the approaching downfall of goodness and the good cause. And this was why the psalmist rejoiced that in his case they had been disappointed. We sympathize in the success of the cause that is dearest to our heart—the good with the good; the bad with the bad. 2. *God had healed him of the sin which caused the chastisement.* (Ver. 2.) What the instance of the sin was may be seen in the sixth verse—*overweening presumption and pride*, produced by prosperity. It was that which threatened his safety, his very life; and it imperils the safety of all who are guilty of it. "Pride goeth before destruction," etc. His faults nothing as compared to virtues. And in being healed of the sin he was restored and lifted back to life. 3. *God had removed also the chastisement of his sin.* (Ver. 3.) It would not have been good to remove the chastisement till it had wrought repentance and brought him humility and trust and watchfulness. God always removes the sin before he takes away the chastisement.

II. **HE USES HIS OWN EXPERIENCE AS A LESSON OF TRUST TO OTHERS.** (Vers. 4, 5.) 1. *Sympathy with men and gratitude to God both teach us to do this.* Others who were then suffering what he had suffered were encouraged to trust in the goodness of God. But the special ground for praise here insisted on is: 2. *That the dark experiences of the righteous are transient, like the tears of a night; but their bright experiences as quickly return as the morning after the night.* (Ver. 5.) Long-continued

sorrow kills; joy is the life-giver which God sends when sorrow has brought us low. The sorrow of the world worketh death, but godly sorrow life.—S.

**Vers. 6—12.—Vain confidence.** “And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved,” etc. Three stages here represented in the life of a good man.

**I. WORLDLY PROSPERITY A SECURITY.** “In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.” 1. *We say this in youth.* All our castles in the air, we think, are built upon mountains. We think we can become anything and achieve anything we please. 2. *We say this before we know our sinfulness.* The ways of the world harden our hearts about our sins. Success in life and the means we employ to reach it will often harden the conscience. Money, luxury, praise, are dreadful things to blind men to their real character and state before God.

**II. THE SENSE OF DANGER AND TROUBLE.** 1. *God hides his face.* We, in our vain confidence, think it is God that has made our mountain to stand strong—till he hides his face, till a great black cloud (our sins) comes between us and God. This phrase, though often misapplied, expresses a very real fact. It is the blackness of darkness to many a terror-stricken sinner. 2. *The terrors of death.* Of death, natural and spiritual, get hold of us. The terror of death, natural and spiritual, is to be forsaken of God in it. This dreadful moment has come to nearly all good men. Some men never get beyond this second stage of life.

**III. RESTORATION TO REAL PROSPERITY AND SECURITY.** 1. *The prosperity of the believer is real prosperity.* It is the prosperity of the soul; it is prosperity from God, and not from man; it is lasting, secure prosperity. 2. *God is the Author of the second and third stages of a good man's life.* “Thou didst hide thy face; . . . thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing,” etc.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXXI.

**THIS psalm is,** in the main, a cry for deliverance out of pressing danger and trouble; but it is interspersed with passages of a more cheerful tone, expressive of faith and confidence (vers. 5—8, 14, 15); and it winds up with a eulogy of God's goodness (vers. 19—22), and an exhortation to the saints of God to “be strong,” and trust in him. The title declares it to be David's; and it both breathes his spirit, and has many of his turns of expression. It has been thought to belong to the period of his early persecution by Saul; but, on the whole, it seems rather suggestive of the later period of trouble connected with the rebellion of Absalom. Dr. Kay divides it into three main portions: (1) vers. 1—13; (2) vers. 14—18; and (3) vers. 19—24; but part i. might be further subdivided into three, and part ii. into two portions. The psalm thus falls into six divisions: part i. (vers. 1—4), prayer; part ii. (vers. 5—8), self-encouragement; part iii. (vers. 9—13), causes of his trouble; part iv. (vers. 14—18), profession of faith and prayer; part v.

(vers. 19—22), praise of God's goodness; part vi. (vers. 23, 24), exhortation to the people to praise God.

**Ver. 1.**—In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. If prayer to God for aid in a special time of trouble is the main object of the psalm, the expression of full trust in God is a secondary object, and is maintained throughout (see vers. 3—8, 14, 19—21, 24). Notwithstanding the extremity of his danger, his belief is firm in the coming overthrow of his enemies, and in his own deliverance and restoration. Let me never be ashamed (comp. ver. 17, where the idea is expanded). David's enemies having come to an open rupture with him, and appealed to arms (2 Sam. xv. 10—12; xvii. 24—26), one party or the other must of necessity be put to shame. Here he prays that it may not be himself; in ver. 17 he goes a step further, and asks that the shame may fall upon his enemies. Deliver me in thy righteousness. Seeing that my cause is the righteous one.

**Ver. 2.**—Bow down thine ear to me; or, incline thine ear to me, as the same phrase is translated in Ps. lxxi. 2. Deliver me speedily. Not doubting of deliverance, he makes his request for *speedy* deliverance (comp. Ps. xxxviii. 22; xl. 17; lxx. 1; lxxi. 12, etc.). Be thou my strong Rock, for



an House of defence to save me; rather, as in the Revised Version, *Be thou to me a strong Rock, an House of defence*, etc. (comp. Ps. xviii. 2).

Ver. 3.—*For thou art my Rock; or, my cliff* (עֲלֵי, not צֶרֶם). And my *Fortress*. David prays God to be his Rock and Fortress in the future, because he has always looked to him as his Rock and Fortress in the past. Faith establishes a claim to have its anticipations made good. Therefore for thy Name's sake lead me, and guide me. Metaphor is dropped, and God is simply asked for guidance and direction. In the struggle between Absalom and David more depended upon wise counsel than upon mere force (2 Sam. xv. 31—37; xvi. 15—23; xvii. 5—23).

Ver. 4.—Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me. Absalom set a trap for David when he asked permission to go to Hebron for the purpose of paying a vow, whereas his object was to get possession of a strongly fortified city (2 Sam. xv. 7—9). It was, perhaps, by a device of Ahithophel's that David was induced to quit Jerusalem and go into exile. For thou art my Strength (comp. Ps. xviii. 1; xix. 15; xxviii. 1, 7, 8, etc.).

Ver. 5.—Into thine hand I commit my spirit. Our Lord's adoption of these words, and application of them to himself and his own departure from earth, have given them a special sacredness beyond that which attaches to Scripture generally. At the same time, they have impressed on them a new meaning, since David was not thinking of a final committal of his soul, as distinct from his body, into the hands of the Creator, but only intended solemnly to commit himself, both soul and body, into the Divine keeping, to be preserved from the attacks of his enemies. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth; or, *thou hast delivered me, O Lord God of truth*. It is redemption in the general sense of "deliverance from peril," not redemption from sin, of which the psalmist speaks. David, having frequently experienced such deliverance in the past, is emboldened to expect now another deliverance.

Ver. 6.—I have hated them that regard lying vanities. By "lying vanities" are meant idolatrous practices, or possibly such superstitious usages as recourse to witchcraft and divination. (For David's hatred of such persons as are here glanced at, see Ps. xxvi. 5.) But I trust in the Lord. Who is the direct opposite of all "lying vanities," being at once Almighty, and the "God of truth" (ver. 5).

Ver. 7.—I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy. Anticipating the "mercy" which he has craved (vers. 2—4), the psalmist determines to "be glad and rejoice in it."

For thou hast considered my trouble. When God looks upon trouble and considers it, he is sure to 'compassionate the sufferer, and to grant him some relief. Thou hast known my soul in adversities (comp. Ps. i. 6, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous"). God is said to "know" those on whom he looks with approval.

Ver. 8.—And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; i.e. "hast not delivered me up, without chance of escape, into the hands of my enemies" (comp. 1 Sam. xxiii. 12). Thou hast set my feet in a large room. Given me, i.e., plenty of space and freedom for action; not confined me, nor cramped me, nor hindered me in any way (comp. Ps. iv. 1; xviii. 36). Having cheered himself with the enumeration of these grounds of encouragement (vers. 5—8), the psalmist again returns to prayer.

Ver. 9.—Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble. The psalmist follows up his prayer for mercy by an exposition of his need of mercy. He is in trouble, in sore trouble—"hard pressed," as Hengstenberg translates—distressed both in mind and body. Mine eye is consumed with grief (comp. Ps. vi. 7, where the expression is almost identical). The grief intended is "that produced by provocation or spiteful treatment" (Kay). It causes him to weep so much that his eye is well-nigh "consumed" or "eaten away." Yea, my soul and my belly. Some explain this as meaning simply "my soul and my body" (Hengstenberg, Alexander, Revised Version); but others regard the "belly" as denoting "the very centre of physical life and of the notions" (comp. Job xxxii. 19).

Ver. 10.—For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing. The psalmist's grief is of old standing. It dates from the time of his great sin (2 Sam. xi. 4—17), which is thought to have preceded the revolt of Absalom by the space of twelve years. This sin necessitated a lifelong repentance (Psa. xxxviii. 17; li. 3, etc.). My strength failed because of mine iniquity. Other causes had, no doubt, contributed to produce the profound depression of the psalmist at this period, but none was of equal force with this (comp. Psa. xxxviii. 3—10; li. 1—14, etc.). It caused his strength to fail utterly, and led to complete prostration both of mind and body. And my bones are consumed; i.e. racked with pain, as though they were being gnawed away.

Ver. 11.—I was a reproach among all mine enemies; rather, *I am become a reproach* (Kay, Revised Version). The psalmist complains of the loss of his reputation. Absalom's rebellion was preceded by a long course of calumnious accusation

of David (2 Sam. xv. 1-4), whereby men's hearts were stolen away from him, and his character blackened. His enemies made the most of these ill reports, and turned them to his reproach (comp. Ps. lxxix. 18-20). But especially among my neighbours. Not that they reproached him more than others, but that he felt their reproaches more keenly. And a fear to mine acquaintance. His acquaintances were afraid of being recognized as such, and involved in his ill repute. They that did see me without, *i.e.* "out of doors," or "in the street." Fleed from me. Avoided my contact, not wishing to be seen with me (comp. Ps. lxxxviii. 8).

Ver. 12.—I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind (comp. Ps. lxxxviii. 5). I am like a broken vessel. Of no value to any one; only fit to be thrown away.

Ver. 13.—For I have heard the slander of many (see the comment on ver. 11). The calumnies circulated against him had reached David's ears, and these had so affected him that he felt as described in the preceding verse. Fear was on every side, while they took counsel together against me. Fear was "on every side"—in his own heart, and in the hearts of all his friends—when it came to the point of his enemies holding a formal council, in which the matter discussed was the best mode of proceeding against him to take away his life. The particulars of such a council are given in 2 Sam. xvii. 1-14. They devised to take away my life. That David's life was sought is apparent from the last clause of ver. 2, "I will smite the king only."

Ver. 14.—But I trusted in thee, O Lord. Having fully represented the miserable condition to which he is reduced (vers. 9-13), David now returns to expressions of trust in God, and to earnest prayer to him (comp. ver. 6). I said, Thou art my God; rather, *I have said*. In all my sufferings, dangers, and difficulties, I have always clung to thee, and said, "Thou, and thou alone, art, and ever shalt be, my God."

Ver. 15.—My times are in thy hand. "My times," *i.e.* "all the varied events, happy or sad, which make up the part-coloured web of life" (Kay). Not one of them but is shaped by thee and ordered by thee. Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me (comp. vers. 1, 2, 4). The great need under existing circumstances was deliverance. Absalom was looked for daily to "pass over Jordan, and all the men of Israel with him" (2 Sam. xvii. 24). A battle was imminent. If the day went against David, and his army was defeated, he would necessarily fall into the hands of his "enemies" and "persecutors," in which

case he could not hope that they would spare his life (2 Sam. xvii. 2, 12).

Ver. 16.—Make thy face to shine upon thy servant. This expression is first used in the blessing of Moses (Numb. vi. 25). Its intrinsic beauty and poetry recommended it to the psalmists, with whom it recurs frequently (comp. Ps. iv. 6; lxxvii. 1; lxxx. 5, 7, 19; exix. 135). It may be regarded as equivalent to "Be thou favourable and gracious unto thy servant." Save me for thy mercies' sake; literally, *save me in thy mercy*.

Ver. 17.—Let me not be ashamed, O Lord (see the comment on ver. 1). For I have called upon thee. "I have," *i.e.*, "been ever thy true worshipper." Even when I have sinned (ver. 10), my sins have not been "sins of unfaithfulness," but lapses, sins of infirmity, unpremeditated yieldings to temptation. Let the wicked be ashamed. Bring shame, *i.e.*, upon those who are at once my enemies and thine—the wicked and impenitent generally—and, among them on my present adversaries, those who are collected together to carry on war against me. And let them be silent in the grave; or, *in Sheol*. Let a stop be put to their slanders (ver. 13) and lying speeches (ver. 18); let them be *silenced* by removal from this world to the land of the departed.

Ver. 18.—Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous; rather, *which speak arrogantly* (comp. 1 Sam. ii. 3). The pride and insolence of David's enemies is strongly noted in the Second Book of Samuel (see xvi. 7, 8; xvii. 1-3).

Ver. 19.—Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! Another transition. David turns from prayer to praise, and in the four next verses (vers. 19-22) eulogizes the goodness and mercy and marvellous loving-kindness of God, who has wrought gloriously for his people in the past, and has further an ample store of mercies laid up for them in the future. Which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! God had wrought his mercies for his own people, but *in the sight* of men generally, whether good or bad.

Ver. 20.—Thou shalt hide (or, *thou hidest*) them in the secret of thy presence from the pride (rather, *conspiracies*) of man. Intense light forms as good a hiding-place as intense darkness. No vision can penetrate it. It is "too dazzling bright for mortal eye." Thus those whom God brings close to himself, and on whom he pours the light of his countenance, need no other protection. Their life is hid in God. Thou shalt keep them (or, *thou keepest them*) secretly in a

pavilion from the strife of tongues. God keeps his own in a "pavilion," or leafy arbour, a place of coolness and refreshment, far away from the "lying lips" (ver. 18) and slanderous tongues (ver. 13) of the ungodly.

Ver. 21.—Blessed be the Lord: for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. The "strong city" has been explained as Ziklag (Delitzsch), or Mahanaim (2 Sam. xvii. 24), but is probably as much a figure of speech as the "pavilion" of ver. 20. God has showed David his marvellous loving-kindness by giving him an assurance of absolute security.

Ver. 22.—For I said in my haste; rather, *and I indeed had said in my haste* (comp. Ps. cxvi. 11). David's faith was not so firmly fixed but that he was liable, from time to time, to a sudden access of fear (see 1 Sam. xxvii. 1; 2 Sam. xv. 14; Ps. xxxi. 13). He had said to God in his heart, on one such occasion, I am out off from before thine eyes; i.e. he had despaired and given himself up for lost. It is somewhat forced to understand the words as meaning, "I am banished from the city where the ark is placed" (Speaker's Commentary). Nevertheless, thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee. God

did not forsake his servant on account of this temporary failure of faith. No sooner did the psalmist rid himself of his extreme alarm, and turn once more to God in prayer, than he was heard, and his prayer answered.

Ver. 23.—O love ye the Lord, all ye his saints. The psalmist winds up with a short burst of song, in which his heart goes out to others. He calls upon all God's saints to "love" him, on the ground of his own experience, which is that the Lord preserveth the faithful (literally, *those who stand firm*, Kay), and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer; i.e. visits with ample vengeance such as in their pride set themselves against him and against his people.

Ver. 24.—Be of good courage (see the comment on Ps. xxvii. 14). And he (*i.e.* God) shall strengthen your heart. "To those who have it shall be given." If they did their best to "be of good courage" when danger and difficulty assailed them, then God would give them supernatural aid, strengthening their hearts with his gracious favour. All ye that hope in the Lord; literally, *all ye that hope for the Lord*; i.e. that hope for his help—that wait on him (see Job xiv. 14; and comp. Ps. xxxiii. 18, 22), and look to him as your Deliverer.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 3.—*A prayer for guidance.* "For thy Name's sake . . . guide me." God leads men, whether they ask him or not. He guides their lives, though they may not know him—even may deny his very existence. Belshazzar (Dan. v. 23, "in whose hand," etc.). Cyrus (Isa. xlv. 1—5). Heathen nations (Acts xvii. 26, 27). Does this make such a prayer as the text superfluous? On the contrary, it is the very reason for it. God's guidance of men without their knowledge, or even against their will, is very different from his guidance of those who ask it for his Name's sake. (As you speak of "driving a horse," or "driving a friend" who asks a seat by your side.) Consider the *meaning* and the *plea* of the psalmist's prayer.

I. WHAT DOES THIS PRAYER ASK FOR? In other words, how can God grant it?  
1. *By the leading of his providence.* Q.d.: his unfailing, unerring, unlimited control of all events and creatures, great or small. The old-fashioned phrase, "particular providence," is often strongly objected to; rightly, if it be taken to mean some special interference with the course of things—here, not there; now, not then; a touch to the helm occasionally, not the firm hand never taken off it. But remember, what cleverest people (busy with wide generalizations and laws) are most apt to forget—that *all reality is particular*. A pound of iron weighs a pound because each atom of iron is precisely like every other, and obeys exactly the same force. The harvest ripens because the same life is working in every several grain. A lifetime is not made up of weeks and years, but breaths and heart-beats. We must not liken God's knowledge to ours. We are compelled to store ours in abstract ideas, names, laws, etc., just as we arrange books on shelves, with titles on their back—useless else. Divine knowledge, just because infinite, must take in every movement of every atom. Inconceivable! But not more inconceivable than that God has set going movements at the rate of *hundreds of millions of millions* in a second, which keep time throughout the universe. And what his power has called into being and sustains, and his knowledge surveys, his wisdom and goodness guide. This, at once deepest truth and plain common sense, is the Bible doctrine of providence. "He maketh grass to grow on the mountains"—

each blade from its own root. Not a bird falls to the earth without our heavenly Father. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Ps. cxxxix. 3, 9, 10). 2. *By his Word.* (2 Tim. iii. 15; Ps. cxix. 105.) What is a lamp for? To give light. How do I know that light *is* light? Simply by its shining. Light is its own evidence. If a lamp cannot be kindled, or, being kindled, refuses to burn, no argument will persuade you that it is a good lamp. If it burns bright and steady, shedding a clear light on the page you read, the work you handle, the path you walk in, no argument will persuade you that it is *not* a good lamp. So with God's Word. Men may dispute as they please about inspiration, pile up mountains of criticism, publish every few years a new work that is to finally dispose of the Bible; they cannot *stop the light from shining*. This main fact remains solid, unanswerable, that a life guided by this light rises to a level, gains a purity, strength, beauty, hopeful courage, and calm settled peace not otherwise attainable. The light, observe, not of mere *precept*. Pagan teachers—Buddha, Confucius, Seneca, and I know not how many, have given noble and lofty precepts, enabling men to say, with the old Roman poet, "I see and approve what is good, though I practise what is bad." But only from the Bible shines, along with precept, the light of *pardon* and the light of *promise* (1 John ii. 12, 25). Against the sceptics' learning and logic the plain Christian sets his experience. If you could find a grey-haired Christian saying, "I have framed my life according to the Bible, and *I wish I had not*; I have lived a life of prayer to God, and trust in Jesus as my Saviour, and obedience to his Word, and if I could begin again, I would be wiser,"—then you would at least have something to set against the lives ruined by despising the Bible, and flinging faith and prayer away. But the testimony is the other way (Pss. cxix. 165; xix. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 6-8). 3. *By his Spirit.* (John xiv. 13; Rom. viii. 14.) The Bible itself affords no countenance to the idea that life can be rightly guided by the written Word alone, severed from the living presence and personal teaching of the Holy Spirit. For three plain reasons. A rightly guided life means: (1) A life of faith in Christ; and this is the Holy Spirit's gift and work (Matt. xvi. 17). (2) A life of prayer; and the Holy Spirit is at once the Answer to prayer and the Inspirer of prayer (Luke xi. 13; Jude 20). (3) The true meaning of Scripture is hidden from an unspiritual mind (1 Cor. ii. 14).

II. WHAT IS THE FORCE OF THE PLEA HERE URGED—"For thy Name's sake"? If one may venture to put it so plainly, it is *putting God on his honour* to fulfil his promises. The "Name" of God stands for all that he has made known to us of himself. Especially it includes his words of promise, because here his faithfulness stands pledged. Not that God promises to grant *every* request, wise or foolish, right or wrong. (Who would dare to pray?) But he does promise to attend to our prayer—to give good things to those who ask. He has filled the Bible with encouragements and commands to pray, and with examples of prayer answered. As our Lord Jesus is himself the full Revelation of the Father, so he authorizes us to pray *in his Name* (John xiv. 13, 14).

CONCLUSION. Of all prayers there is none we need to offer more earnestly, more constantly. 1. *Without God's guidance we shall miss our way.* A life at the mercy of passion, expediency, fashion, fancy, is like a rudderless ship. Especially in trouble and temptation. The traveller in fair, calm weather may think the mountain-track is plain enough without a guide; but the snowstorm comes on, and he is lost. 2. *If God be not your Guide, you will have some other.* Conformity to the world is practical submission to the enemy of souls (Eph. ii. 2, 3. "He who bows not to him has bowed to me," Byron's 'Cain'). Like a ship that has taken on board a false pilot, who steers her on the quicksand. 3. *Life is a journey to be taken but once.* The wrong path cannot be retraced.

Ver. 15.—*God's sovereign will.* "My times are in thy hand." "The stream cannot rise higher than its source." If this be true in the spiritual as in the material world, then the feelings, desires, trust, which rise so mightily to God in this psalm, and throughout the Book of Psalms, must have their fountain in God. The Psalter is the mouthpiece of the Bible, uttering the testimony of experience, not fictitious, but real; living, personal experience—if such ever was; the genuine outcome of human hearts; yet withal superhuman, Divine; the breath of God's own Spirit (Rom. viii. 26).

I. HERE IS THE RECOGNITION OF A DIVINE GUIDANCE AND PURPOSE IN EACH ONE'S LIFE. "My times;" *q.d.* the daily circumstances, and whole plan and arrangement of my life; the number of its days and years, birth and death, seasons of joy and sorrow, strength and weakness, prosperity and adversity (Eccles. iii. 1—8). Scripture is full of examples of this special training. Abraham, Joseph, John the Baptist (a life seemingly broken off prematurely), St. Paul. In each child of God there is a character to be formed, fruit ripened, an end attained.

II. PERFECT TRUST IN GOD'S WISDOM, POWER, LOVE. These words, "my" and "thy," express conscious personal relation to God. Personal trust forms the most sacred relation between man and man—the basis and cement of human society. It is the glory of the Bible, distinguishing its teaching from all human systems, that it rests religion on this personal trust. We are saved by faith. We walk by faith. We love God because we trust him and believe his Word (1 John iv. 16, 19). Because the psalmist can say, "I trusted," etc. (ver. 14), he fears not to say, "My times are in thy hand;" and to add vers. 19, 20, 24. Note that from this psalm (ver. 5) our Saviour drew his dying prayer.

III. DUTIFUL SUBMISSION TO GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL. If God did not rule all things, he could rule nothing. Each life—yours, mine—with all its vicissitudes, has its place in his great plan. "No man liveth to himself." The calm happiness and triumph of faith is not merely submission to God's will when manifest, but willingness that he shall choose (Phil. i. 20—25; iv. 5—7, 11—13). Sometimes we are tempted to shrink from this full surrender, from half-unconscious fear that trial may be good for us, which God is too faithful and wise to spare us; as we might dread to call in the most skilful surgeon, lest he should say the diseased limb must come off.

CONCLUSION. The text has a special application to (1) the young; (2) those in the full activity of mid-life; (3) those who have reached old age.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—24.—*The saint rehearsing his experience of the great Protector's care.* There is no good reason to doubt that this is one of David's psalms. Its forms of expression bear the marks of his pen,<sup>1</sup> and the "undesigned coincidences"<sup>2</sup> between it and the history of his life are both interesting and striking. The old interpreters supposed the psalm to belong to the time when David fled from Saul into the wilderness of Maon; others attribute it to the time of his deliverance from being shut up in Keilah, with which, indeed, it seems well to agree. While, in some respects, the psalm resembles others, yet, in others, it has features exclusively its own. Its title, according to the LXX., is, "For the end, a Psalm of David, of extreme fear" (*ἐκ τῆς φόβου*). The Vulgate has *pro extasi*. Under such emotion, it is not to be wondered at if the verses bid defiance to all logical order. There *is*, however, beneath the surface an order which is full of helpful teaching, by which, when perceived, the beauty of the psalm will stand revealed, as otherwise it could not have been. This order we will seek carefully to follow and to expound.

I. GOD'S SAINTS MAY BE AT TIMES IN EXTREME DISTRESS. The list of troubles here specified is an unusually long one. 1. A net is spread for David (ver. 4). 2. There is a design on his life (ver. 13). 3. Bands of men are conspiring together (ver. 20, Hebrew). 4. His friends forget him (ver. 12). 5. His enemies are guilty of falsehood (ver. 18), reproach (ver. 11), slander (ver. 13). 6. Others unfeelingly flee from him (ver. 11). 7. He is in perplexity (ver. 9). 8. His strength faileth, his bones are consumed, because the consciousness of his own sin adds its bitterness to his woe (ver. 10). 9. His alarm (Hebrew) is so great, that he regards his case as one deserted by God (ver. 22). Here, surely, is a list of woes longer than most men could reckon up. There are few against whom enemies would take so much trouble to plot! But David was in a high position, and *therefore* he was a mark to be shot at! Note:

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Maclaren's 'Life of David,' etc., pp. 132, 133.

<sup>2</sup> As pointed out by Mr. Fausset, 'Horæ Psalmicæ,' lects. ii., v., xii.; see Geikie's 'Hours with the Bible,' iii. 164, 165.

The higher our position, and the greater our usefulness, the more likely is it that Satan will aim at us with his fiery darts. The more we disturb him, the more he will disturb us. And, for wise and holy reasons, the Lord may allow a messenger of Satan to buffet<sup>1</sup> us.

II. EVEN WHEN IN THE LOWEST DEPTHS, THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE SAINT FOR A SINNER, the believer for an alien, the godly one for a godless man. Scarce any one could have a longer list of woes to enumerate than David had, but yet the saint shines through all. 1. *He knows where to flee for protection.* (Ver. 1, Hebrew.) The way in which he still speaks to God as *his* God, *his* strong Rock, etc., is inexpressibly touching. "*Be thou my Rock, . . . because thou art my Rock,*" is a wonderfully tender appeal to the loving heart of God. Even in the densest darkness the loving child must clasp the Father's hand, and cry, "Father!" Yes, because of the darkness, and the denser it is, the louder and more piercing will be his cry. 2. *He knows to whom he flees*—even to One who has redeemed him (ver. 5). (For the Scripture usage of this word "redeemed," see Deut. ix. 26; xxi. 8; 1 Chron. xvii. 21; Isa. xxix. 22; Jer. xxxi. 11; Micah vi. 4; Ps. cxxx. 8; xxv. 22; Hos. xiii. 14.) David was one who knew God, not only as a Deliverer from earthly calamity, but as a Redeemer from sin. And he could well put in this as a plea on which to base his petitions. The richest evangelical form of this argument is given in Rom. v. 10; viii. 32. If God has taught us and drawn us by his Spirit to plead with him, that is the witness of the Spirit to the fact that we are redeemed out of the world. 3. *He knows he may tell all his woes to God, just as they are.* It has been no small comfort to us in writing these homilies to note, again and again, how the psalmist told God everything, just as he felt it. This *we*, too, may do, knowing that God will accept the prayer of faith and will bury all its faults. 4. *He can absolutely leave all with God,* not as one who finds it useless to contend with the inevitable, but as one who can implicitly trust his redeeming God. (1) All his *times* are in God's hand; the entire ordering of them; nothing will be neglected or overlooked. (2) He *trusts his spirit*<sup>2</sup> in God's hands<sup>3</sup> (ver. 5); *i.e.* his inner self, the immortal part of his being, wherein he is made in the image of God. Note: Since we know God as our redeeming God, who has graciously promised to be ours to the end, in our deepest sorrows, we may trust *everything* with him.

III. GOD'S SAINTS CAN SCARCELY END THEIR MOAN Ere THEIR WORDS TURN TO SONG. When the Spirit of God presides at the soul's keyboard, the sounds may at first be in the minor key, but they will not long continue so. The plaint will be a *diminuendo*, and will be substituted by a *crescendo* of joyful song. Hence so many of the psalms which begin woefully end joyfully. There are three several mercies here recorded. 1. *Deliverance.* (Vers. 7, 8.) The narrow straits in which David was hedged up gave way, and he had amplitude of room. And sooner or later, in his own time and way, God will deliver the righteous out of the hands of the wicked.<sup>4</sup> 2. *Treasures of goodness laid up.* (Ver. 9.) The thought of this evokes a very shout of praise, as well it may. Let the student compare the three expressions in ver. 4, "the net which they have laid privily;" ver. 19, "goodness . . . laid up secretly;" ver. 20, "Thou shalt keep them secretly." Is not the antithesis beautiful? The wicked have their nets laid in secret. But God's secrecy of love outwits theirs. He hides the saints in the secret place of his "pavilion," and prepares for them in secret "treasures of goodness," to be brought forth in all their richness as occasion requires. Note: God will be bringing forth from his secret treasury of love to all eternity. 3. *Marvellous kindness manifested*; and this in a besieged (Heb. v. 21) city (cf. Ps. xxiii. 5). At the very moment foes were encamping round him, God ministered such rich loving-kindness as to bear him up and bring him through. So it will ever be. The moment of man's fiercest plots will be that of God's most vigilant care (Ps. cxxi. 4). And within the walls of the thickest dungeon God can minister richest supplies of heavenly food!

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 7. *Κολαφίζειν* is "to give a blow on the face," or mouth, or ear.

<sup>2</sup> Canon Girdlestone, in his 'Old Testament Synonyms,' has an admirable chapter on the Bible use of the words *נֶפֶשׁ* and *רוּחַ*, ch. iv. pp. 92, *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Our Saviour quoted, on the cross, the *first* half of ver. 5. On these sympathetic quotations, from One who was in all points tempted like as we are, see our remarks on Ps. xxii.

<sup>4</sup> On the petitions against enemies, in vers. 17, 18, see our remarks on Ps. xxviii. 4.

IV. SUCH EXPERIENCES WILL LEAD THE SAINTS TO CALL ON THEIR FELLOW-BELIEVERS TO HOPE IN THE LORD, AND TO WAIT FOR HIM. (Vers. 23, 24.) The new experience of God's loving-kindness and care, which is born of such deliverances in answer to prayer, gives believers wondrous vantage-ground in exhorting others to put their whole trust in the Lord. Note: 1. It is an infinite mercy that God's providential care has preserved to us these records of the struggles, the prayers, and the triumphs of his saints. 2. Those who have known the most trouble are those who can afterwards minister most comfort to those who are troubled (2 Cor. i. 3—5). 3. Let those who have known the depths of sorrow, and who have learnt how God can deliver, make their experience known to others (Ps. lxxi. 16—20). 4. How abundant even now is God's recompense for his people's sorrows, when he thereby gives them such tastes of his love as they could not else have had, and then makes them "sons of consolation"!—C.

Vers. 5, 15.—*Duty and destiny.* Let us place these two texts together, and we shall find that they become the more intelligible and the richer in instruction and comfort.

I. OUR TIMES ARE FIXED BY GOD. We have no choice in the matter, no more than as to when we should be born. God is Sovereign. It is his prerogative to settle all things that concern us. Whatever comes of prosperity or adversity, or joy or sorrow, is of his ordering. It is for him to rule, it is for us to trust and to obey.

II. OUR SPIRIT CAN ONLY BE COMMITTED TO GOD BY OUR OWN DEED. We are free. When we act, we express the feelings of our hearts. To commit our spirit to God is to surrender ourselves wholly and for ever to his will. It is only when we know and believe in God's love towards us, that we can joyously do this transcendent thing that will settle our destiny for time and for eternity.

III. IT IS ONLY WHEN WE HAVE IN TRUTH COMMITTED OUR SPIRITS TO GOD, THAT WE CAN TAKE COMFORT FROM THE KNOWLEDGE THAT OUR TIMES ARE IN HIS HAND. We should be careful to put that first which should be first (Matt. vi. 33). When the most precious thing is safe, we need not be much concerned as to the lesser things. God has given us the greatest proof of his love, for he has redeemed us; we can therefore with quiet hearts leave to him the ordering of all things that concern us (Rom. v. 9, 10). "My times are in thy hand;" and it is there I would have placed them if I had the choice (2 Sam. xxiv. 14). "My times are in thy hand;" then come what will of vicissitude and trial, nothing can befall me but what is of the ordering of God. "My times are in thy hand;" therefore I will be content and not fret; I will trust, and not be afraid; I will work, and not be weary in well-doing. I will be patient and hope to the end, knowing that "all things work together for good to them that love God." "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." This I did at the first, when the Lord Jesus called me; this I would do evermore during my earthly course, after the example of thy saints; this I would do in the end, as our Lord himself has taught us.—W. F.

Ver. 8.—*Opportunity.* The young are eager for opportunities. Conscious of power, they fondly think that, if only a fair chance were to come, they would be sure to make a name for themselves. But they are often disappointed. Perhaps they say it is not their fault; but unprejudiced onlookers see that, through lack of insight, decision, or perseverance, they have failed. They have let the tide, which, taken at the flood, would have led on to fortune, pass by. Life is full of possibilities. It is our wisdom to watch, to be on the alert, to make the most of opportunities. We must be willing to begin where we are free to begin, and to do the duty, however humble, that lies nearest to us, as well as we are able. Honest work is the best training and preparation for advancement. Above all, we must have regard to the will and doings of God. If we ask of him, he will give us light. If we wait upon him, he will let us know his will. If we do with our might what he gives us to do, he will enlarge our opportunities. We may take the text to illustrate what God does for his servants in the way of opportunity. The "large room" may apply to—

I. CULTIVATION OF CHARACTER. There may be circumstances which are unfavourable. It is much more difficult for some, from their birth and surroundings, to be

good and to do good, than for others. Let us acknowledge God's love in placing us where we have free play for our minds, and every help and inducement to follow the things which are good. We are not in the dark, but in the light; we are not confined and straitened, but in the enjoyment of freedom; we are not denied the use of air and food and exercise, but have the use of all that is good and fitted to nourish our strength and virtue, that we may grow up unto the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus.

II. EMPLOYMENT OF TALENT. There may be some, as the poet suggests, to whom opportunity has not come.

"Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,  
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll."

But it is not so with us. God has not only given us talents, but also provided a sphere for their rightful and beneficent use. There are differences as regard natural ability; unto some it is one talent, unto others two or more. But there is no difference as to opportunity. The command is laid upon all to work; and God's commands imply opportunity to all who choose to obey. If we are willing, "the large room" will be given us.

III. INCREASING USEFULNESS. We are placed in such relationship to others that we cannot but influence them one way or another. Whether this influence be for good or for evil will mainly depend upon our character. God prepares his servants for the place and work he has for them to do. When the time comes, they find that difficulties give way—that "a large and effectual door" has been opened to them. But to every one, however humble, there is opportunity given of doing good and of being helpful to others. Never a day dawns but it brings its own duties. Woe to us if, like Dives, we fail to recognize the claims of the poor and needy! They who are at our gate to-day, so that we can do them good if we will, may be to-morrow in "Abraham's bosom," and our opportunity gone for ever.

IV. HIGHER HONOURS. It has been said of the government of Napoleon that it was remarkable for opening a career to talent. In old France, society was so constituted that it was only the highborn and the rich, the classes and not the masses, that had any chance. Under Napoleon all this was changed. Not only could a man hope to rise by his merits, but he also knew that he served a master who would rigidly exact what was required in the way of duty, and reward only according to work done. Besides, he knew that what his master demanded of others he made a law to himself. Consequently, never did a sovereign inspire a greater enthusiasm of devotion. At the side of every soldier, from the highest to the lowest, seemed to stand the form of the emperor, ready to mark, ready to exact; but, above all, setting the example of his own immense activity, and stimulating all to do their part worthily in the great work in which they were engaged. If this was in a measure true of Napoleon and his soldiers, it is true in a far higher and nobler way of Christ and his soldiers. Take an example in Matthew. See what he was before Christ found him. See what he became when Christ called him away from his "seat at the receipt of custom," and all his selfish, narrow, degrading ways, and placed him in the "large room," where he had not only the noblest society and the means of living the purest life, but where there was opened up to him ever more increasing opportunities of usefulness and honour. It is said that in his first love and joy he "made a great feast" to his friends; and this was but an unconscious prophecy of the "great feast" which he has spread for all people in his glorious Gospel. But Levi was but a sample. "Such honour have all the saints."—W. F.

Vers. 1—8.—*A prayer for grace in trouble.* Authorship uncertain. Some give it to David, in Ziklag; others to Jeremiah. Three divisions. (1) He prays God to be gracious to him in his trouble, expressing at the same time his confidence in him, as if the prayer had been already fulfilled (vers. 1—8); (2) he pours out the story of his sufferings and sorrows, and repeating his prayer (vers. 9—18); (3) he concludes with praise and thanksgiving (vers. 19—24).

I. THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER. The trouble that oppressed him had been of long duration, as appears from the tenth verse. 1. *He prays for deliverance from his*



*trouble.* (Ver. 1.) Does not qualify the prayer, but seeks absolute deliverance. It was to him an unqualified evil, and, as evil, he had no thought it could be working any good for him. So the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from evil," would be put to shame if not delivered. 2. *He prays for protection and defence.* (Ver. 2.) He apart from God was weak against the united power of his enemies. "If God be for us, who can be against us" with any success? 3. *He prays for leading and guidance.* (Ver. 3.) That he may see and feel the way of safety amid the bewildering dangers of his path. Christ is our great Leader, "the Beginner and Finisher of our faith." Striking description of Christ. 4. *He prays that he may escape out of the secret snares that were set for him.* (Ver. 4.) We cannot fight against hidden dangers.

II. THE EXULTING FAITH IN WHICH HE PLEADS WITH GOD. He trusts: 1. *In God's righteousness.* (Ver. 1.) God's righteousness demands that he should not give him over to the unrighteous. He could not doubt that. 2. *He knew that God was his Strength and Refuge.* (Vers. 3, 4.) Prove thyself to be to me what I know thou art—my Rock and House of defence. "Thou art my Strength." 3. *He knew that God had redeemed him.* (Ver. 5.) And therefore he surrenders his spirit into his keeping, knowing him to be a God of truth, i.e. faithful to his word and to his work. "He who hath begun a good work," etc.; "Perfect that which concerneth me." 4. *He knew that God saw his trouble and adversities.* (Ver. 7.) And that therefore out of merciful compassion he would interpose to rescue him. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him," etc. 5. *He enjoys deliverance already by anticipation.* (Ver. 8.) "Thou hast set my feet in wide, open spaces," where I can roam at liberty. Faith like this removes mountains of difficulties—

"Laughs at impossibilities,  
And says, 'It shall be done.'"

S.

Vers. 9—18.—*A story of suffering and sorrow.* The psalmist now, in the spirit of heartfelt trust in the helping grace of God, proceeds first to describe at length his trouble (vers. 9, 13); and second, to pray for deliverance (vers. 14—18).

I. CAUSES OF TROUBLE. (Vers. 9, 13.) 1. *Consciousness of sin.* (Vers. 9, 10.) This was the constant lifelong grief. None but good men feel their sinfulness so acutely. 2. *Loss of reputation.* (Vers. 11, 12.) "A fear to mine acquaintance;" so that they avoided him. "Like a broken vessel;" equivalent to "an object of contempt." 3. *Stood in constant danger of his life.* (Ver. 13.) Through slander and misrepresentation, he was in constant fear and dread. Like some kings who live in constant dread of assassination.

II. THE CRY FOR DELIVERANCE. (Vers. 14—18.) 1. *Seeks to reassure himself of his personal relation to God.* (Ver. 14.) Nothing more difficult, when we see our faith despised by the whole world, than to rest on the testimony of our own conscience that "God is our God." 2. *Because his times were in God's hand, he was not left to the mercy of his enemies.* (Ver. 15.) God could transform evil into good, and danger into safety. 3. *He was God's servant, and on that ground he cried for protection.* (Ver. 16.) "Make thy face to shine." The good Master would be merciful "for his own sake" towards his servant. 4. *God would not allow his faith in him to be put to shame.* (Ver. 17.) He puts God in remembrance of his promise that he will hear and help those who call upon him with heartfelt confidence. He prays that his enemies may be struck dumb with the silence of the grave, so that they may be no longer able to slander him (ver. 18). His faith in God reached thus to all the difficulties of his life, and might be called a *working faith*.—S.

Vers. 19—24.—*Praise and thanksgiving.* From ver. 1 to ver. 8 the Lord may, must, and will help him in his trouble, because he is his God. From ver. 9 to ver. 18 he describes at length his trouble, and brings it to God. From ver. 19 to ver. 24—

I. THE PSALMIST OBTAINS FROM GOD THE HEARTFELT ASSURANCE OF HELP, AND PRAISES GOD FOR IT. 1. *God's goodness is a treasure laid up for future as well as present use and blessing.* (Isa. lxi. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 9.) Same thought in substance in all these passages. Compare with the parable of "the treasure." 2. *God hides and protects those who trust in him*—as in a royal pavilion (ver. 20). 3. *God was to the*

psalmist what a strong city is to those who seek safety. (Ver. 21.) 4. God's great goodness was shown to him openly and secretly. (Vers. 19, 20.) The former to discomfit his enemies, and the latter for his own comfort and faith.

II. MAN'S UNBELIEF AND THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS. (Ver. 22.) 1. He was in haste, flying from his enemies, when he said this. We say and do things in panic which we disown in calmer hours. "He that believeth shall not make haste." 2. But God pardoned his unbelief, and answered the inarticulate cry of the heart.

III. LESSONS ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCH, DRAWN FROM HIS OWN EXPERIENCE. (Vers. 23, 24.) 1. What love and reverence we owe to God because of his retributive work! (Ver. 23.) He preserveth the faithful, and rewardeth the proud. This is good and just. 2. With what courage we should hope in God! (Ver. 24.) He strengthens us by his Spirit to hope and trust in him. From him must be derived the power for every duty and every difficulty. This must be the ground of our courage.—S.

### EXPOSITION.

#### PSALM XXXII.

THIS psalm has been selected by the Church for one of the "seven penitential psalms." It forms a part of the service of the synagogue on the great Day of Atonement. Yet it is almost as much jubilant as penitent. It opens with two beatitudes. The writer, while very sensible of his sin (vers. 3—5), is still more sensible of the fact that his sin is pardoned (vers. 1, 2, 7, 10). While his first words breathe content and gratitude, his last are a shout of rejoicing (ver. 10). It is allowed generally that the psalm is David's. Written probably soon after his repentance, but not immediately after, it expresses at once his sorrow for his grievous lapse, and his joy when he dwelt in thought upon the words, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin" (2 Sam. xii. 13). It likewise tells us something of his state of feeling during the interval between the commission of the sin and Nathan's coming to him (vers. 3, 4).

The last word of the title, "Maaschil," is thought to mean that the psalm was intended for instruction, warning, or admonition; the word *maschil*, or rather *maskil*, being formed from *askil*, "to instruct"—the opening word of the eighth verse—used also in Ps. ii. 10; liii. 2, etc. There are thirteen psalms thus inscribed, all more or less of a didactic character.

Rhythmically, the psalm seems to be composed of six strophes, each of two verses; but in the third strophe the two verses have been joined in one.

Ver. I.—Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. There

are three aspects under which sin is viewed in Holy Scripture: 1. As an offence against God's Law. This is "transgression"—*ἀνομία*. 2. As an offence against the eternal and immutable rule of right. This is "sin"—*ἁμαρτία*. 3. As an internal depravation and defilement of the sinner's soul. This is "iniquity"—*ἀδικία* (comp. Exod. xxxiv. 7). Each aspect of sin has its own especial remedy, or manner of removal. The "transgression" is "lifted up," "taken away"—*αἴρεται, ἀφαίρεται*—more vaguely *ἀφίεται*. The "sin" is "covered," "hidden"—*καλύπτεται, ἐπικαλύπτεται*. The "iniquity" is "not imputed"—*οὐ λογίζεται*. The union of all three, as here in vers. 1, 2, is complete remission or forgiveness.

Ver. 2.—Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. "Iniquity"—the defilement of the sinner's own soul by sin—is not at once removable; if removable at all, it is only so by long lapse of time, and God's special mercy. But God can, at his own will and at any moment, "not impute" it—not count it against the sinner to his detriment. Then in God's sight the man is clean; it is as though the iniquity were not there. And in whose spirit there is no guile; i.e. no false seeming—no hypocrisy—where repentance has been sincere and real.

Ver. 3.—When I kept silence; i.e. so long as I did not acknowledge my sin—while I remained silent about it, quite aware that I had sinned grievously, suffering in conscience, but not confessing it even to myself. The time spoken of is that which immediately followed the commission of the adultery, and which continued until Nathan uttered the words, "Thou art the man!" (2 Sam. xii. 7). My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; i.e. I suffered grievous pain, both bodily and mental. My bones ached (comp. Ps. vi. 2; xxxi. 10); and I "roared," or groaned, in spirit, "all the day long." Unconfessed sin rankles in the heart of a man who is not far gone in vice.

but has been surprised into a wicked action, no sooner done than regretted. Such a one, in Archbishop Leighton's words, "*Vulnus alit venis et cæco carpitur igne.*"

Ver. 4.—For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me. David sees now that his sufferings at this time came from God, and were a part of the punishment of his sin. They continued without intermission both by day and by night. His conscience was never wholly at rest. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer; literally, *my sap was changed through summer drought*; i.e. the vital principle, which had been strong in him, was changed—burnt up and exhausted—by the heat of God's wrath.

Ver. 5.—I acknowledged my sin unto thee (comp. 2 Sam. xii. 13). Conscience once fully awakened, all reticence was broken down. David confessed his sin fully and freely—confessed it as "sin," as "transgression," and as "iniquity" (compare the comment on ver. 1). And mine iniquity have I not hid; rather, *did I not hide*. I did not attempt to gloss over or conceal the extent of my guilt, but laid my soul bare before thee. Hengstenberg well remarks that the psalmist is probably not speaking of a "making known by the mouth," but of "an inward confession, such as is accompanied with painful repentance and sorrow, with begging of pardon for sin and for the offence rendered to the Divine Majesty." I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Upon David's confession, whether it were inward or outward, followed without any interval God's forgiveness—forgiveness which, however, did not preclude the exaction of a penalty required for the justification of God's ways to man (2 Sam. xii. 14), and also, perhaps, for proper impressing of the offender himself, who would have been less sensible of the heinousness of his sin, if it had gone unpunished.

Ver. 6.—For this; or, *because of this*; i.e. on account of this experience of mine—this immediate following of the grant of forgiveness upon confession of sin—shall every one that is godly—i.e. that is sincere and earnest in religion, though he may be overtaken in a fault or surprised into a sin—pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found; literally, *in a time of finding*, which some understand as a time when God "finds," and visits, some iniquity in his servants, and others, as the Authorized Version, "in a time when thou art gracious, and allowest thyself to be found by those who approach thee." Surely in the floods of great waters they (i.e. the waters) shall not come nigh unto him; i.e. shall not approach such a man to injure him.

Ver. 7.—Thou art my hiding-place (comp. Ps. xvii. 8; xxvii. 5; xxxi. 20; cxliii. 9); thou shalt preserve me from trouble. Hidden in God, there can no harm happen to him. Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. "Songs of deliverance" are such songs as men sing when they have been delivered from peril. God will make such songs to sound in the psalmist's ears or in his heart.

Vers. 8, 9.—St. Jerome, and others after him, including Dr. Kay, have regarded this passage as an utterance of God, who first admonishes David, and then passes on to an admonition of the Israelites generally. But such a sudden intrusion of a Divine utterance, without any notice of a change of speaker, is without parallel in the Psalms, and should certainly not be admitted without some plain necessity. Here is no necessity at all. The words are quite suitable in the mouth of David, as an admonition to the Israelites of his time; they accord with the title, which he himself seems to have prefixed to the psalm, and explain it; and they fulfil the promise made in Ps. li. 15.

Ver. 8.—I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. We must suppose the "godly man" of ver. 6 addressed, if we regard David as the speaker. Such a man was not beyond the need of instruction and teaching, since he was liable to sins of infirmity, and even to grievous falls, as had been seen by David's example. I will guide thee with mine eye; i.e. "I will keep watch over thee with mine eye, and guide thee as I see to be necessary."

Ver. 9.—Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding. The singular is exchanged for the plural, since the "instruction" is now intended, not for the godly man only, but for all. Israel had been always stiff-necked (Exod. xxxii. 9; xxxiii. 3, 5; xxxiv. 9; Deut. ix. 6, 13; x. 16; 2 Chron. xxx. 8; Acts vii. 51), like a restive horse or mule. David exhorts them to be so no more. The horse and mule are excusable, since they "have no understanding"—or, "no discernment"—Israel would be inexcusable, since it had the gift of reason. Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle; rather, *whose adornings are with bit and bridle to hold them in* (compare the Revised Version). Lest they come near unto thee. This clause is obscure. It may mean, "Lest they come too near to thee," so as to do thee damage, as when a riding horse tosses his head and strikes the rider in the face, or when a chariot horse rears and falls back upon the driver; or it may

mean, "Else they will not come near to thee," *i.e.* until they are trapped with bit and bridle, they will refuse to come near to thee.

Ver. 10.—Many sorrows shall be to the wicked. A further warning to those addressed in the preceding verse. The LXX. emphasize this by substituting for the generic "sorrows" the specific *μωσταιες*, "lashes," the usual punishment of the horse and mule. But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about (comp. Dent. xxxii. 10).

Ver. 11.—Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous. David's psalms almost always

end with a note of joy, or at any rate in a tone that is cheerful and encouraging. The present psalm, though reckoned among the penitential ones, both begins and ends with joyful utterances. In vers. 1, 2 David pours forth the feeling of gladness which fills his own heart. Here he calls upon the "righteous" generally, who yet need forgiveness, to rejoice with him. And shont for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. All ye, *i.e.*, who are honest and sincere in your endeavours after well-doing. The phrase explains the "righteous" of the preceding hemistich.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The blessedness of pardon.* "Blessed is he," etc. The Old Testament Scriptures contain what we may call *moral prophecies*, no less striking than the historical and typical prophecies. This verse is among them. Beginning with this grand Bible word "blessed" (like Ps. i.), it resembles an echo, a thousand years beforehand, of the Sermon on the Mount. We find here, not only "the shadow of good things to come," but "the very image" of the gospel promises of pardon and justification. Accordingly, St. Paul quotes and argues from these words (Rom. iv. 5—8). (1) In what does this blessedness consist? (2) How is it attained?

I. IN WHAT DOES THIS BLESSEDNESS CONSIST? 1. *In the actual fact of deliverance from the guilt and punishment of transgression.* Forgiveness is a reality on God's part, because sin is a reality on our part. Forgiveness, or justification, is sometimes spoken of as "treating the sinner as though he had not sinned." This is but loose, figurative language. The reverse is the case. Forgiveness implies sin (Rom. iv. 5). Sin may have alleviations—ignorance, overpowering temptation, constitutional infirmity, and so forth—but as sin it is disobedience to God's Law. Therefore if God has really given a moral law to men, he is bound as righteous (Gen. xviii. 25) to take account of sin—of every sin of every sinner. Men have sinned (Rom. iii. 23). Therefore (innocence being lost) every one must necessarily be either forgiven or condemned. Accordingly, our Saviour always speaks of forgiveness as a definite act (Matt. ix. 2, 6; Luke vii. 47). His apostles in like manner (1 John ii. 12; Acts ii. 38; xiii. 38, 39). 2. *In the joyful consciousness of pardon and reconciliation to God.* These two—the fact and the consciousness—ought always to go together; but, as matter of fact, they do not. It is a great mistake to confound faith with assurance. Perfect, undoubting faith in God's promise, if that promise be rightly understood, must needs bring with it the blessed and joyful certainty of the fulfilment of the promise. But faith may be real, yet far from perfect; clouded by ignorance or error; enfeebled by doubt and fear shadowed by self-distrust; yet real, like the faith of sinking Peter. 3. *In the holy and happy influence of this belief and sense of forgiveness on the heart and life; making God loved, sin hated, self humbled, obedience happy and free from bondage.* Deliverance from the punishment of sin is not to be overrated as the chief element in this blessedness; yet it is a real and powerful source.

II. HOW OBTAINED? 1. The first step is a *true sense of sin and of the need of pardon.* This height of joy is reached at a rebound from the dust of self-abasement. 2. *Personal reliance on Christ,* acceptance of his atonement, and of God's offer and promise of pardon through him. 3. *The study of God's Word, with prayer for the Holy Spirit's teaching.* (2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. i. 17—19.) Make sure, first, what God's Word really declares; then take God at his word. Beware of the subtle delusion of putting your own faith in place of Christ.

Ver. 1.—(Second outline.) *The blessedness of pardon* may belong to widely different stages of Christian experience. Take, *e.g.*, those of which we have images in Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress'—in Christian's entering the wicket-gate, losing his

burden, escaping from the dungeon of Giant Despair. First faith; full faith; recovered faith.

**I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF A FIRST FAITH.** A first conscious, undoubting reception of God's promise—the glad tidings (Luke xxiv. 47; Acts xiii. 32, 38); and personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord (Acts xvi. 30—34).

**II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF FULL FAITH.** Unlimited trust in *all* that God has promised, and acceptance of *all* that he has given us in Christ. Christian was in the path of salvation, the way of life, from the moment he entered the gate; but he was not quit of his burden till he came in full view of the cross of Christ (1 John iv. 16, 19; v. 12).

**III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF FAITH RESTORED AFTER FAILURE.** The joy of forgiveness, forfeited by sin, recovered; and love, faith, hope, again kindled by the Holy Spirit, in place of gloom and despair. Christian was far on in his journey when he and his comrade strayed into By-path Meadow and fell into the clutches of the giant. This is the psalmist's experience. He had fallen into gross sin; and, as long as he "kept silence," refused to confess to God and to humble himself, he had no rest or peace (vers. 3, 4). When he turned in penitence and trust to God, the fount of joy was at once reopened in his heart. He escaped from bondage into freedom (ver. 5; 1 John i. 8, 9; ii. 1, 2).

**Ver. 3.—Hindrances to confession of sin.** "I kept silence."

**I. PRIDE.** Men cannot bear to think themselves wrong—to put themselves down on the common level; still less, *below* those who have sought and obtained pardon. This pride is itself a great sin (Jas. iv. 6; 1 Tim. iii. 4).

**II. WANT OF HONESTY OF CONSCIENCE.** Even proper self-respect should make one say, "Anything rather than self-deception! Let me know the truth of myself!"

**III. INDOLENCE.** Many are busy enough outwardly, but mentally indolent, spiritually stagnant.

**IV. SOME ARE TOO BUSY.** Too much occupied with the appendages of life ever to know what it is truly to live!

**V. CARELESSNESS.** Two kinds of hardness of heart noted in Scripture. 1. Stubborn self-will. 2. Want of feeling ("fat," Isa. vi. 10).

**VI. INSENSIBILITY TO GOD'S CLAIMS.** Their greatness, urgency, inevitableness, the blessedness of yielding to them. This lies deep at the root of all the rest. Were these felt, pride would bow, conscience wake, indolence and carelessness vanish; all worldly concerns and aims appear in comparison as "less than nothing, and vanity."

**VII. HENCE LOW VIEWS OF GOD'S LAW,** of the absolute necessity of righteousness, and the infinite evil of sin.

**Ver. 5.—Confession of sin.** Let men argue as they please against the Bible; they cannot deny or alter the fact that this book has a power of laying hold on the heart and conscience, unrivalled and unique. One reason is its penetrating knowledge of human nature; another, its deep and wide sympathy. Our interest is quickened, sympathy roused, because we are presented, not with abstract truth, dry dogma, but with living experience. Conscience can be impartial, judgment cool, because it is another's case, not our own, we contemplate. Suddenly, when we thought we were looking at a picture, we find it is a mirror. The still small voice says, "Thou art the man!"

**I. A BURDENED SPIRIT HIDING ITSELF BEHIND DUMB LIPS.** David "kept silence"—would not acknowledge his sins even to himself, therefore, of course, not to God. Forget them, he could not. But (we may assume) he excused them—laid the blame (as we so easily do) on temptation and circumstance and nature. Besides, was a king to be bound within as strict limits as an ordinary person? Had not his blackest crime—the murder of his brave, faithful general—been in a manner forced on him? He "kept silence" before others,—perhaps was specially exemplary in public worship and pious ceremony; "kept silence" before God,—perhaps kept up rigidly the form of prayer, but, though his lips prayed, his heart was dumb. Wonderful is the deceitfulness of sin; the self-ignorance into which it betrays us (Jas. i. 14, 15)!

**II. THE BROKEN HEART AND CONTRITE SPIRIT POURING OUT ITS PENITENT CONFESSION TO GOD.** As long as David "kept silence," the Lord had a controversy with

him. His "hand was heavy." Possibly in some stroke of sickness; perhaps only in the bodily disorder which springs from mental suffering. The ghastly secret refused to be buried in silence and oblivion. The burden grew intolerable. At last he said, "I will confess my transgressions." 1. *To his own conscience.* "The first step is the hardest;" and perhaps the hardest thing in frank confession is to acknowledge sin to one's self. It is easy to say, "We have erred and strayed," when everybody else says so; quite another thing to say, in the lonely silence of your own thought, "I am wrong." No one likes that. No one *ought* to like it. But it has to be done, or confession to God—or to man—is a vain form. 2. *What next?* The carrying out of the purpose; the soul alone with God, saying, "Father, I have sinned!" Many a man blames himself inwardly, bitterly, proudly; but it leads to nothing. He does not acknowledge his sin to God. Here are three words which give three views of sin. (1) *Sin.* The Hebrew word properly means "error," "failure," "missing the mark." (2) *Iniquity*: perverseness, depravity, with the added idea of guilt: "The iniquity [or, 'guilt'] of my sin." 3. *Transgression*: breaking away, viz. from obedience to God's Law; rebellion. (In vers. 1, 2 same words in different order.)

III. THE IMMEDIATE RELIEF AND INFINITE COMFORT FOUND IN TURNING TO GOD. The guilty silence is broken. The veil of self-delusion is rent off. The sinner takes his right attitude, his true position before God. Not the same as though he had not sinned,—that is impossible; but that which belongs to him in fact. There is a dawn of comfort in this. At least we have done with falsehood, come on to the firm ground of truth. But the only real comfort is, not in our penitence, but in God's promises. Confession and repentance do not lay the ground of forgiveness, or of the hope and certainty of it. God has laid that (2 Cor. v. 19—21). The name of God is significant here: not "God" the Almighty Creator, but "the Lord," *i.e.* Jehovah—God's covenant name with Israel. Nature holds out no inducement to confess sin, no hope of pardon. Its law is, "Reap what you have sown." If the ground of acceptance were our repentance, we never could be assured that it was adequate. But God's faithfulness and justice are pledged to grant what his love has already provided in the gift of his Son (1 John i. 9). Confession is just the breaking down of the barrier raised, not by our sin, but by impenitence and unbelief; at once the stream of Divine mercy flows unhindered, "Thou forgavest," etc.

CONCLUSION. This experience was too exemplary, too instructive, too precious, to be permitted to perish in forgetfulness. The Holy Spirit (as we said) does not merely paint a picture, but holds up a mirror. David's experience may be ours.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*Divine forgiveness.* This psalm is one of those historically established as David's.<sup>1</sup> It has long been a favourite with the greatest saints, who are the very ones that own themselves the greatest sinners. Luther referred to it as one of his special psalms. So Dr. Chalmers, who, it is said, could scarcely read its first three verses without tears filling his eyes. The compression necessary to keep this work within moderate limits renders it impossible to do more than point out how it might profitably be expanded and expounded in a course of sermons. It is headed, "A Psalm, giving instruction;" *i.e.* a didactic psalm—a *doctrinal* one, in fact, and as such is to be one of the songs of the sanctuary. Note: They fall into error who do not regard the rehearsal of Divine truth as a fitting method of sacred song. We may not only sing praise to God, but may speak "to one another in psalms, and hymns,<sup>2</sup> and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord." This psalm is a grateful rehearsal of the blessedness of Divine forgiveness. We see therein—

I. FORGIVENESS NEEDED. Here, indeed, the expositor must be clear, firm, direct, swift, pointed. We have: 1. *Sin committed.* The Hebrew language, poor as its vocabulary in many directions, is abundant in the terms used in connection with sin.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ewald, in 'Revelation, its Nature and Record,' p. 278, note (T. and T. Clark).

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Watts's grand hymn, "The mighty frame of glorious grace," is a noble, yea, a sublime illustration of this.

<sup>3</sup> See Mr. Girdlestone's 'Synonyms of the Old Testament.'

It is and ever will remain the differential feature of the education of the Hebrew people, that they were taught so emphatically and constantly the evil of sin. For this purpose the Law was their child-guide with a view to Christ (Gal. iii. 24). Of the several terms used to express sin, three are employed here.<sup>1</sup> One, which denotes "missing the mark;" a second, which denotes "overstepping the mark;" a third, which denotes "crookedness or unevenness." Over and above corresponding terms in the New Testament, we have two definitions of sin. One in 1 John iii. 4, "Sin is the transgression of law;" another in 1 John v. 1, "All injustice is sin." We can never show men the value of the gospel until they see the evil of sin. Some minds are most effectively reached by one aspect of truth, and others by another; but surely from one or other of these Scripture terms or phrases the preacher may prepare a set of arrows that by God's blessing will pierce some through the joints of their armour. Nor can the reality or evil of sin be fairly evaded by any plea drawn from the modern doctrine of evolution; since, even if that theory be valid, *the emergence of consciousness and of moral responsibility* at a certain stage of evolution is as certain a phenomenon as any other. Men *know* they have done wrong, and it behoves the preacher not to quit his hold of them till he has driven conviction of the evil of sin against God deeply into the soul! 2. *Sin concealed.* (Ver. 2.) "I kept silence," *i.e.* towards God. In the specific case referred to here, sin had disclosed its fearful reality by breaking out openly; it was known, yet unacknowledged. Hence: 3. *Sin rankled* within (ver. 2, "my bores," etc.). Remorse and self-reproach succeeded to the numbness which was the first effect of the sin. There was a reaction—restlessness seized on the guilty one. The action of a guilty conscience brings within a man the most terribly consuming of all agitation. He cannot flee from himself, and his guilt and dread pursue him everywhere (Job xv. 20—25; xviii. 11; xx. 11—29;<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxviii. 1). Hence it is a great relief to note the next stage. 4. *Sin confessed.* (Ver. 5.) What a mercy that our God is one to whom we can unburden our guilt, telling him all, knowing that in the storehouse of infinite grace and love there is exhaustless mercy that will "multiply pardons" (Isa. lv. 7, Hebrew)! 5. *Sin put away.* (Ver. 2.) "In whose spirit there is no guile;" *i.e.* no deceit, no reserve, no concealment, no continuing in the sin which is thus bemoaned, but, at the moment it is confessed towards God, honestly and entirely putting it away. And when once the sin and guilt are thus put away before God, it will not be long ere the penitent has to recount the experience of—

II. FORGIVENESS OBTAINED AND ENJOYED. He who guilelessly puts away sin by repentance will surely find that God lovingly puts it away by pardon (ver. 5). And as the Hebrew is ample in its terms for sin, so also is it in the varied words and phrases to express Divine forgiveness. Three of these are used here; but in the Hebrew there are, at least, ten others.<sup>3</sup> 1. "*Forgiven.*" (Ver. 1.) The Hebrew word means "lifted off;" in this case the LXX. render "remitted," but sometimes they translate the Hebrew term literally, by a word which also means "to lift off," "to lift up," "to bear," and "to bear away"<sup>4</sup> (cf. John i. 29; 1 John iii. 5; Matt. ix. 5, 6). In Divine forgiveness, the burden of sin is lifted off from us and borne away by the Son of God; the penitent is also "let go." His indictment is cancelled, and from sin's penalty he is set free.<sup>5</sup> 2. *Covered;* as with a lid, or a veil: put out of sight. God looks on it no more (Micah vii. 18). 3. "*Iniquity not imputed.*" It is no more reckoned to the penitent. With absolution there is complete and entire acquittal, and with the non-imputation of sin there is the imputation of righteousness (Rom. iii., iv., v.), or the full and free reception of the pardoned one into the Divine favour, in

<sup>1</sup> The following terms are used for "sin:" חָטָא, "foolishness," "vanity;" חָסַד, "missing the mark;" עָוָה, "overstepping the mark;" עָזַב, "departure from good;" יָפָה, "perverse-ness;" רָעָה, "sinfulness"—vanity, nothing.

<sup>2</sup> Though Job's three friends were wrong in applying these words to him, they are true enough in reference to the wicked.

<sup>3</sup> The varied terms to express Divine forgiveness should each be carefully studied. they may be found in Fürst's 'Lexicon,' *sub verb.* יָצַח.

<sup>4</sup> See Cremer's 'Lexicon of New Testament Greek,' *sub verb.* ἀφίημι and ἀίρω; and Schlusner on Old Testament Greek.

<sup>5</sup> See the introduction to Dr. Simon's 'Discussions on the Atonement;' also Dr. Dale's work on the Atonement; and Perowne's notes on the whole psalm.

which a standing of privilege, that in his own right he could not claim, is freely accorded to him through the aboundings of Divine grace.

III. **FORGIVENESS BEARING FRUIT.** This psalm is itself the product of a forgiven man's pen. It would be a psychological impossibility for an unregenerate and unpardoned man ever to have written it. The psalmist's experience of forgiving love bears fruit: 1. *In grateful song.* (Ver. 7.) "Songs of deliverance" will now take the place of consuming remorse and penitential groans. 2. *In new thoughts of God.* (Ver. 7.) "Thou art my Hiding-place," etc. In the God whose pardoning love he has known, he will now find a perpetual Protector and Friend. 3. *In joyous declaration to others.* (Vers. 1, 2.) "Blessed . . . blessed," etc. The emphasis is doubly intense. (1) There is a blessedness *in* forgiveness itself. To have the burden of guilt lifted off, and the sentence of condemnation cancelled, what blessedness is here! (2) There is blessedness which *follows* on forgiveness. New freedom. New joy in God. New ties of love. New citizenship. New heirship. New prospects. Oh! the blessedness! 4. *In exhortation.* (Vers. 8, 9.) We regard these as the psalmist's words,<sup>1</sup> in which he uses his own experience to counsel others. Broken-hearted penitents make the best evangelists. The exhortation is threefold. (1) He bids us not to be perverse and obdurate, *i.e.* in attempting to conceal our guilt; but rather to show the reason of reasonable men in confessing and abandoning it (ver. 9). (2) He reminds us that, while resistance to God will only surround us with woes, trust in God will ensure our being encompassed with mercies (ver. 10). (3) He bids truly sincere, upright, penitent souls—men without guile—to rejoice in God, yea, even to shout for joy, because of that forgiving love which buries all the past guilt of the penitent in the ocean of redeeming grace, and enriches the pardoned one with the heirship of everlasting life.—C.

Ver. 1.—*The blessedness of forgiveness.* What our Lord said to Simon *before* his fall, seems to have been said to David *after* his great transgression, "When thou art converted, strengthen the brethren" (Luke xxii. 32; Ps. li. 12, 13). Nobly was the duty performed. Many who were walking in darkness have here found light. Many who were deluding themselves with false hopes have here been taught the way of peace; many who have been hardening their hearts in sin have here been laid hold of, and led, as with cords of love, back to God. The burden of the psalm is the blessedness of forgiveness.

I. In the first place, we are taught that this is **A DOCTRINE ACCORDING TO GODLINESS.** (Vers. 1, 2.) Three things are set forth. 1. *What sin is.* The terms used are very significant, and deserve the deepest study: "transgression," "sin," "iniquity." The evil is traced to the root. Our unhappiness is caused by sin (vers. 3, 4). 2. *Then we are shown how sin may be taken away.* This is God's doing. There is a twofold work—something done *for* us, and something done *in* us. God thus meets the necessities of our case by not only removing guilt, but by renovating character. 3. The result is *blessedness.* This is the doctrine of the Law and the prophets (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; Lev. xvi. 21; Isa. liii. 5, 6; Dan. ix. 24). It is also the doctrine of the New Testament. The Law is fulfilled in Christ. In him God is reconciled to us, and we are reconciled to God. Paul and David agree (Rom. iv. 6, 7). Justification is not of works, but of grace. There can be no true happiness till with all frankness and sincerity we confess our sins, and cast ourselves with simple faith on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus (Prov. xxviii. 13; Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24; 2 Cor. v. 19, 21).

II. In the second place, **THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVENESS IS ILLUSTRATED FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.** The Bible contains both doctrines and facts, and while the doctrines explain the facts, the facts enforce the doctrines. When a man speaks of what he knows, when he tells of what he has himself gone through, when he sets forth

<sup>1</sup> There are some who regard the eighth verse as the utterance of God; so Geikie, introducing the words, "Thou sayest," after ver. 7. Such sudden change of person is not infrequent in the Hebrew, and might be assumed here, if the passage required it. But as there is a steady flow of statements following naturally one on the other, there is no need for such a supposition here. Hengstenberg, Walford, Calvin, Delitzsch, and others regard the words as those of David. Calvin remarks thereon, "We are reconciled to God upon condition that every man endeavour to make his brethren partakers of the same benefit." See, however, Dr. Maclaren's 'Life of David as reflected in his Psalms' (xiii. pp. 205—231).



**facts bearing on our personal life and needs, we readily listen to his story.** 1. First, we are shown *the misery of the man who keeps silence as to his sins before God.* (Vers. 3, 4.) For long David kept his sins to himself, in pride and sullenness. This was not only doing an injury to his own soul, but it was lying to men, and grievously offending against God. The result was wretchedness. He suffered in body and spirit. He could find no rest. Every effort that he made to better himself, so long as he refused to humble his heart before God by confession, only aggravated his pain. Wherever he went, his sins haunted him. Whatever he did, he could not rid himself of the terrible thought that God's judgments would fall upon him. How vividly does this bring out the evil of sin and the mercy of God! If left to ourselves, our sins would be our ruin; but God mercifully will not let us alone. His hand is laid upon us, in loving counsel and chastisement, till we are brought to repentance. 2. We are next shown *the way of recovering the blessedness we have lost.* (Vers. 5, 6.) There had been a long and painful struggle. Now it is ended. Instead of pride, there is humility. Instead of hiding of sin, there is frank and full confession. Instead of holding back in sullenness from God, there is absolute surrender to his righteous judgment. The relief is instantaneous. What a blessed change! It is coming out of the dark into the light. It is abandoning all concealment and guile, and finding peace in God's love and mercy. How beautifully does the picture here agree with that other picture drawn by the hand of our Saviour!—"I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;" "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin;" "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (ver. 5; Luke xv. 18—20).

III. In the third place, **THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVENESS IS COMMENDED BY THE TESTIMONY OF GOD'S SAINTS.** Augustine and others have given us their Confessions. These are not only a tale, but a testimony. They not only agree as witnessing for God, but they are a directory for the benefit of all anxious inquirers. So it was with David. He speaks not only for himself, but for others. He as much as says, "My case is not singular; God has dealt with others in the same way; this is the law of the kingdom." "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." The lessons are—that forgiveness is a blessing greatly to be desired; that it is surely attainable by all who seek it in the right way; and that when enjoyed it brings new and abiding joys into life. There is both counsel and warning. God has his own way and his own time for showing mercy. There is a limit (Isa. lv. 6, 7; Heb. iii. 1). Every pain of body, every remonstrance of reason, every compunction of conscience, are premonitions of judgment, and call for instant action. God in his providence and in his Word saith, "Now is the accepted time."

IV. In the last place, we are shown how **THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVENESS IS IN AGREEMENT WITH GOD'S GRACIOUS PURPOSES TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE.** When God begins, he will make an end. Forgiveness is the first thing, but it is introductory to other and greater blessings. Among men, when a criminal is released, he goes forth into society as with the brand of Cain on his brow. But God's ways are not as our ways. When he brings the sinner into a right relation to himself, he not only fully forgives, but he continues his love and mercy to the end. Life henceforth is divinely guided. Obedience is no longer a restraint, but a delight. The future is bright with hope, and will bring new blessings, calling for ever new gratitude and joy. When we can truly say, like Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" then we can look on without fear to the end.—W. F.

Ver. 8.—*God's guidance.* Learn—

I. **THE PLACE OF GUIDANCE.** Unless we are able to see God's eye, we cannot be guided. What hinders? Our sins. "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up" (Ps. xl. 12). The great thing, therefore, is to confess our sins, that they may be put away, and then, "accepted in the Beloved," we can "look up" with childlike trust, and cry, "Abba, Father!"

II. **THE MANNER OF GUIDANCE.** 1. *Authoritative.* As master and servant (Ps. cxxiii. 2). 2. *Kindly.* Loving as a father, gentle as a mother (Jer. xxiv. 6; Prov.

iv. 3). 3. *Sure*. Moses knew the desert well, but he might err. He was glad, therefore, of the help of Hobab, "Thou mayest be to us *instead of eyes*" (Numb. x. 31). How much more surely may we depend upon God in our wilderness journey! "Except the eye of the Lord be put out, we cannot be put out of his sight and care" (Donne).

III. THE HAPPY RESULTS OF GUIDANCE. 1. *Peace*. We cannot guide ourselves; nor can we trust to others, even the wisest and the best, to guide us; but when we put ourselves under the care and direction of God, we feel that all is well (Jer. x. 23; Ps. cxix. 165). 2. *Freedom*. God does not take pleasure in "the bit and bridle." He would have us be guided through our reason and heart rather than by restraint and force. He works in us both "to will and to do." He makes us free by the truth, that our service may be not from fear, but love. 3. *Courageousness*. (2 Chron. xx. 12.) God's eye upon us is an inspiration. Gideon felt a new man when the Lord looked upon him (Judg. vi. 14). Paul had a heart for any fate when Christ stood by him in the storm (Acts xxvii. 23). Stephen went to a cruel death with love and joy under the eye of his Master (Acts vii. 56—60). 4. *Hope*. In humble, trustful self-surrender and love we can go forward with confidence. God's eye upon us, and our eyes upon God, we are safe for time and for eternity.—W. F.

Vers. 1—5.—*From great misery to greater blessedness*. There can be little doubt that David composed this psalm after Nathan came to him. Ps. li. was the confession of his great sin, and the prayer for forgiveness. This is the record of the confession made and the forgiveness obtained, and the blessedness of his position as a son restored to his Father's house.

I. THE GREATEST MISERY. 1. *The knowledge that we have sinned*. That we have been guilty of one great sin leading on to another, as David had been; and not of some isolated sin of infirmity, or of some transient temper that spends itself at the moment. None but a good man would feel the awful misery here described. Bad, burdened men sin and feel no burden of shame or guilt. 2. *The attempt to reason away our guilt*. "In whose spirit there is no guile," or self-deception. David was an Eastern monarch, whose temptation would be to think he might do as he pleased, and thus to reduce his sin to the *minimum* point. We extenuate our evil deeds by pleading circumstances, temptation, temperament, and we deceive ourselves. 3. *The attempt to suppress the consciousness of guilt*. We "keep silence," and try to hide from ourselves our sin, and relapse into only a dull consciousness of it. But there was a smouldering fire beneath that dried up the vital moisture of his being and consumed his very bones. Afraid to confess his sin either to God or to himself, he could not escape the burden which the Divine hand laid upon his conscience; and hence his misery. He "roared" all the day long under it. This is God's mercy and anger towards our sin—to drive us to seek release and forgiveness.

II. THE GREATEST BLESSEDNESS. 1. *We must begin by the fullest acknowledgment of our sin to ourselves*. This must be done before we can sincerely make confession to God. We must be angry with ourselves before we can feel God's anger or his mercy towards us. 2. *The fullest, most penitent confession to God*. (Ver. 5.) "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." Most sins have a threefold aspect—as done against another, against ourselves, and against God, the Fatherly Lawgiver. 3. *The consciousness of forgiveness*. This includes two things—the free remission and the inner cleansing. (1) The transgression is taken away; (2) covered by God, not by the sinner; and (3) not imputed, because taken away. It is throughout a *real* transaction, not a fictitious one. Then is a man blessed with the peace of God.—S.

Vers. 6—11.—*The attitude of the penitent*. Because of the grace thus vouchsafed to every penitent, David would encourage all the godly to seek him who deals so graciously with sinners. Out of his past and present experience he will now counsel others, and especially those who are still impenitent, and the tenor of his counsel is that they should not, like brutes, refuse submission till they are forced into it. The passage may be divided into two parts: (1) the attitude of the forgiven penitent towards God; (2) his attitude as a teacher of the impenitent.

I. THE ATTITUDE OF THE FORGIVEN PENITENT TOWARDS GOD. (Vers. 6, 7.)  
1. *Confidence in God for others*. (Ver. 6.) What God has done for him, he will do

for all the penitent and godly. Not a partial God, but his principles of action are universal. God can always be found by the truly penitent; *i.e.* he always hears them when they call upon him (ver. 6). He averts from them the judgments ("great waters") that threaten to overwhelm the wicked (ver. 6). 2. *Confidence in God for himself.* (Ver. 7.) He lives in God as his Castle or Hiding-place, secure from danger and trouble. This idea is enlarged and exalted by Christianity. "Your life is hid *with Christ* in God." The security is all the greater because we are joined *with Christ* in God. God will surround him with abundant causes of thankful songs—songs of deliverance. Turn where he may, he finds the delivering hand of God at work on his behalf.

II. HIS ATTITUDE AS A TEACHER OF THE IMPENITENT. (Vers. 8—11.) 1. *His experience qualifies him to show men the way they should go.* "Then—after thou hast delivered me—will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." He knew the road which he urged them to take—knew it from experience, not from any theory. 2. *This made him a gentle, sympathetic guide.* He will guide them with the gentle guidance of the eye. A look is enough for those who are willing to go in the right way—a look in the direction which is to be pointed out. Experience taught him to be pitiful. 3. *He exhorts men against a brutish and stubborn impenitence.* (Ver. 9.) Do not be like the brute, which must be compelled to service, "who doth not willingly come unto thee;" but as reasonable religious creatures, be *willing* for the service which is great and blessed. 4. *He sums up the whole question.* (Ver. 10.) The sorrows which encompass the wicked, and the mercy that follows those who trust in God. "Mercy;" equivalent to "loving-kindness." A tremendous contrast. 5. *An exhortation to the righteous to realize their blessed estate.* (Ver. 11.)—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXXIII.

THIS psalm has no title in the Hebrew, and in some manuscripts it is joined on to the preceding psalm, and forms one with it. But the difference of subject-matter and of tone render it highly improbable that that arrangement is the correct one. The two psalms are best regarded as wholly separate compositions, though the writer of the present one took for his key-note the last verse of Ps. xxxii. The Septuagint makes David the author, but with no support from the Hebrew. An author in the reign of Asa or Jehoshaphat, and again one in the reign of Josiah, has been suggested, but the psalm itself scarcely gives a hint towards fixing the date.

As a simple psalm of praise and thanksgiving, intended for the service of the temple, it is well worthy of admiration, being "singularly bright, and replete with beautiful imagery" ('Speaker's Commentary'). Metrically, it consists of six strophes, the first and last containing three verses each, and the intermediate ones each four verses.

Ver. 1.—Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous (see the first clause of Ps. xxxii. 11, of

which this is almost a repetition; and comp. also Ps. lxxviii. 3; xcvii. 12). For praise is comely for the upright. The Prayer-book Version gives the meaning, less literally, but in more idiomatic English, "For it becometh well the just to be thankful."

Ver. 2.—Praise the Lord with harp. The harp obtains mention here for the first time in the Psalms. Reference, however, had been made to it previously in Genesis, Job, and the First Book of Samuel. There is reason to believe that the instrument, as known to the Hebrews, was a simple one, consisting of a nearly triangular framework of wood, crossed by seven strings. The Egyptians were acquainted from early times with a very much more elaborate instrument—harps which stood six feet high upon a broad base of their own, and had as many as twenty-two strings (Rawlinson, 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 521). The harp was regarded by the Hebrews as peculiarly fitted for sacred music (see 1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Sam. vi. 5; 1 Chron. xv. 16; xxv. 1, 3, 6; 2 Chron. v. 12; xxix. 25; Neh. xii. 27, etc.). Sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings; rather, *sing unto him with the lute of ten strings*. One instrument only is here mentioned—a lute or psaltery (*nebel*), having ten strings (comp. Ps. xcii. 3; cxliv. 9). The *nebel* was an instrument differing from the harp chiefly in the arrangement of the strings. It was

used in the temple service, as appears from 1 Chron. xv. 6, 28; xxv. 1, 6; 2 Chron. v. 12; xxix. 25, etc.

Ver. 3.—Sing unto him a new song (comp. Psa. xl. 3; xcvi. 1; xcvi. 1; Isa. xlii. 10; Rev. v. 9; xiv. 3). Not necessarily a song unheard before, but one fresh from the singer's heart. Play skilfully with a loud noise. The loudness of a thanksgiving song was regarded as an indication of its heartiness (comp. Psa. xcvi. 4; c. 1; cl. 5; and see also 2 Chron. xx. 19; xxx. 21; Ezra iii. 11—13; Neh. xii. 42).

Ver. 4.—The psalmist proceeds to give reasons why God is to be praised, and puts in the forefront this reason: For the word of the Lord is right; i.e. the revealed will of God is exactly in accord with the eternal rule of right. We cannot imagine it otherwise, for God would contradict his own nature, if he ordained by a positive law anything contrary to that rule. But still we may be thankful that there is no such contradiction—that "the Law is holy, just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12). And all his works are done in truth (comp. Pa. cxi. 7, 8, "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and equity"). All God's working (עֲשָׂתוֹ), all his dealings with his creatures have truth and equity and faithfulness for their basis. He can be thoroughly trusted. This is a second and very strong ground for thanksgiving.

Ver. 5.—He loveth righteousness and judgment. "Righteousness" is the essential principle of justice; "judgment," the carrying out of the principle in act. God loves both—a further ground for praising him. The earth is full of the goodness (or, *loving-kindness*) of the Lord (comp. Pa. cxix. 64). The earth is full, not only of God's glory (Isa. vi. 3) and of his riches (Ps. civ. 24), but also of his mercy, or loving-kindness (חַסֵּד)—a ground of thankfulness that all will acknowledge.

Ver. 6.—By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. God is to be praised, not only for his goodness, but also for his greatness, and especially for his greatness in creation (see Pa. xix. 1—6). The heavens were made "by his word" in a double sense—by the Word, who is the Second Person of the Trinity (John i. 3; Heb. i. 2, 10), and by a mere utterance, without the employment of any mechanical means, as we learn from Gen. i. 6—8. And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. The "host of heaven" is here, undoubtedly, the host of heavenly bodies—the sun, moon, and stars—as in Gen. ii. 1. These were made "by the breath of God's mouth;" i.e. by his simple utterance of the command—

"Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night" (Gen. i. 14; comp. Job xxvi. 13).

Ver. 7.—He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap. An allusion to Gen. i. 8, but with a glance also at Exod. xv. 8 and Josh. iii. 13—16; as if the original gathering, and continued retention, of the sea in one convex mass were as great a proof of omnipotence as the miracles related in those passages. *Nés* (נֶסֶם), "a heap," occurs only in the places cited, here, and in Ps. lxxviii. 13. He layeth up the depth in storehouses; literally, *the deeps*. The waters of the great deep are regarded as stored up by the Almighty in the huge cavities of the ocean bed for his own use, to be employed at some time or other in carrying out his purposes (comp. Gen. vii. 11 and Job xxxviii. 22, 23).

Vers. 8—11.—From the exhortation in ver. 1, addressed to the righteous, to *praise* the Lord, the psalmist passes now to a second exhortation, addressed to all mankind, to *fear* the Lord. And as before in vers. 4—7, so now in vers. 9—11, he assigns reasons. God is to be feared (1) on account of the power which he showed in creation (ver. 9); (2) on account of his ability to baffle all human counsels that are opposed to him (ver. 10); and (3) on account of the unchangeableness and perpetuity of his own counsels, which nothing can alter (ver. 11).

Ver. 8.—Let all the earth fear the Lord. The righteous alone have a right to "praise" God (see ver. 1), but "all the earth"—i.e. all mankind—may be called upon to "fear" him. He is an object of awe and true "godly fear" to godly men; to the ungodly he is an object of terror and servile fear. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. Here again, as so often, the second hemistich merely echoes the first.

Ver. 9.—For he spake, and it was done; rather, *and it was*; the thing of which he spake at once existed. See the passage of Genesis which Longinus thought so striking an instance of the sublime, "And God said, Let there be light; and *there was* light" (Gen. i. 3). He commanded, and it stood fast; literally, *and it stood*. God's lightest word, once uttered, is a standing law, to which nature absolutely conforms, and man ought to conform (comp. Pa. cxix. 90, 91).

Ver. 10.—The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought; literally, *frustrates the counsel of the heathen*, causes it to fail (see 2 Kings vi. 8—12; Dan. vi. 5—23).

He maketh the devices of the people—rather, *the people*—of none effect. Another instance of the mere repetition of a thought in other words.

Ver. 11.—The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations; or, *the devices of his heart*—the same word as in the latter clause of the preceding verse. The contrast is made as complete as possible. Human counsels and devices fail and come to nought, the Divine counsels and devices abide, stand fast, and remain firm for ever (comp. Prov. xix. 21; Isa. xxv. 1; Jas. i. 17).

Vers. 12—19.—Further reasons for praising God are now assigned, the recitation of them being itself a sort of praise. 1. God has blessed especially one nation—the nation now called upon to praise him (ver. 12). 2. His providence and care are extended over all mankind (vers. 13, 14). 3. His gracious influences are poured out on the hearts of all (ver. 15). 4. He is the sole Protector and Deliverer of men from danger and death (vers. 16—19).

Ver. 12.—Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord (comp. Ps. cxliv. 15). In other words, "Blessed is the people of Israel." Other nations did not know God as Jehovah—the Self-existent One—or, indeed, as a general rule, recognize any one and only God. And the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. The intrusion of the word "and" is unfortunate. One "nation" or "people" only is spoken of, viz. the Hebrews. They are "blessed" in two respects: first, because they know God as Jehovah; and secondly, because he has chosen them out of all the nations of the earth to be his "peculiar people" (see Exod. xix. 5; Deut. iv. 20; vii. 6; xiv. 2; 1 Kings viii. 53; Ps. cxxxv. 4, etc.).

Ver. 13.—The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of man (comp. Ps. xi. 4; xiv. 2; cii. 19). God's having any care at all for man is a wondrous condescension, and so worthy of all praise; his having regard to *all* men—all the frail sons of weak and sinful Adam—is still more wonderful, still more deserving of eulogy.

Ver. 14.—From the place of his habitation (i.e. heaven) he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. A repetition of the thought expressed in ver. 13 for the sake of emphasis.

Ver. 15.—He fashioneth their hearts alike; rather, *he mouldeth the hearts of them all*. The hearts of all men are in God's keeping, and his gracious influences are exerted to "mould" them aright. Some hearts are too stubborn to yield themselves

up to his fashioning, and refuse to take the impress which he desires to impart; but all, or almost all, owe it to him that they are not worse than they are. He considereth all their works; rather, *he understandeth all their works*—estimates, i.e., all they do at its just value, knowing the true nature of each act, its motive, aim, essence.

Ver. 16.—There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; literally, *the king is not saved by the greatness of his host*. The article, however, is used generically, as it is with "horse" in the next verse, so that the translation of the Authorized Version gives the true sense. (For illustration of the sentiment, see 2 Chron. xiv. 11; 1 Macc. iii. 19.) A mighty man is not delivered by much strength (comp. 1 Sam. xvii. 47).

Ver. 17.—A horse is a vain thing for safety; literally, *the horse*; i.e. the species, horse, is not to be depended on for safety—it is "a vain thing," quite unable to secure victory, or even escape, to those who trust in it. The use of the horse in war seems certainly to be implied here as familiar to the writer, whence it is rightly concluded that he must have lived later than the time of David. Solomon was the first Israelite king who enrolled a chariot and a cavalry force (1 Kings x. 26). Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. (On the "great strength" of the horse, see Job xxxix. 19; Ps. cxlvii. 10.)

Ver. 18.—Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy. The eye of the Lord is in a certain sense upon all (vers. 13, 14), but it rests especially upon the righteous. He notes how all men act, but carefully watches over the safety and prosperity of his faithful ones.

Ver. 19.—To deliver their soul from death. The protection and deliverance, which a man's own strength cannot give, which no host, however numerous, can afford (ver. 16), which are not to be obtained from the largest chariot or cavalry force (ver. 17), can be and will be furnished freely by God, who alone keeps souls from death, and "delivers" those who are in peril. And to keep them alive in famine. Famine was a calamity from which Palestine often suffered (see Gen. xii. 10; xvi. 1; xlii. 5; Ruth i. 1; 2 Sam. xxi. 1; 1 Kings xviii. 5; 2 Kings viii. 1, etc.). The righteous were sometimes "kept alive" through a time of famine by miraculous means (1 Kings xvii. 6, 16).

Vers. 20—22.—A brief address of the people to God, arising out of what has been declared concerning his goodness (vers. 4, 5, 12—19) and his power (vers. 6—11), which constitute a call upon them for praise and adoration.

Ver. 20.—Our soul waiteth for the Lord (comp. Ps. xxv. 21; lxiii. 1, 5; cxxx. 5, 6, etc.). Confident in God's good will, and in his power to help us, we wait patiently and cheerfully for him to manifest himself in his own good time. He is our Help and our Shield. We trust in no one and nothing but him—not in armies (ver. 16), not in horses (ver. 17), not in our own strength (ver. 16). He alone is our dependance. (For the use of the metaphor "shield" for defence, see Ps. v. 12; xviii. 2; xxviii. 7; xci. 4; cxix. 114, etc.)

Ver. 21.—For our heart shall rejoice in

him, because we have trusted in his holy Name (comp. Ps. xlii. 5, where the sentiment is the same). Trust in God secures his help, and this brings the deliverance at which the heart rejoices.

Ver. 22.—Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee. The measure of men's hope and trust in God is the measure of his mercy and goodness to them. Those who are assured that they have a full trust in him may confidently expect a full and complete deliverance. Thus, "according as"—*כְּחֶמְדְּךָ*—is emphatic.

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—(First sermon.) *Spiritual worship.* "Rejoice," etc. Worship is worthless if it be not spiritual. "God is a Spirit," etc. (John iv. 24). But worship simply spiritual, with no outward expression, no material symbol, would not suffice man's nature. Man is not spirit only; he is also flesh. His eye, ear, voice, nerves, brain, are as much God's work as his spirit. The worship he owes to God is that of his whole nature—body, soul, and spirit. Spiritual life cannot live on public worship only. There are chambers in the temple of the soul which are secret from every eye but God's. "Thou, when thou prayest," etc. (Matt. vi. 6). But if public worship alone will not satisfy our religious need, neither will secret worship. Man's nature is social. Even in sorrow, though we may shrink from company, we like sympathy to follow us into our solitude. But joy naturally seeks partners, longs to express itself, is sociable, outspoken, and sympathetic. Hence public worship is not an artificial contrivance, such as warm, vigorous piety can afford to dispense with or despise; it is the natural and fitting outcome of spiritual life, and one of the most powerful means for its nourishment. It is indispensable, and the full, complete exercise of Christian fellowship. Let us speak of the reasons and motives which make praise alike a duty and a privilege.

I. THE GOODNESS AND FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. (Vers. 4, 5.) Characteristic of Bible to place *moral attributes* in the foreground, as chief reason for "rejoicing in the Lord." A poet would have put first (what here comes second) the splendour and variety of God's works. A philosopher, the infinity, eternity, absolute existence of God. Scripture puts that first which at once concerns us most, and is God's highest glory—his *character*.

II. GLORY OF GOD IN CREATION. His all-wise design and all-powerful will—both included in "the word of the Lord" (vers. 6—9).

III. GOD'S ALL-EMBRACING PROVIDENCE. Controlling all human affairs; baffling and making void, when he sees fit, all human counsels; creating, reading, ruling the minds of men (vers. 10—15).

IV. GOD'S SPECIAL CARE AND MERCY TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE. Those who love and trust him (vers. 16—22). This is contrasted with the vanity of earthly power (vers. 16, 17). Yet, in this boundless prospect, the highest, deepest, strongest reason for praise is not included. To the Old Testament saints the veil still hung before the holy of holies. The Holy Spirit gave them the hope and promise of things as yet hid in mystery (Matt. xlii. 16, 17; Eph. iii. 5; 1 John iv. 10). This is the main theme of the worship of heaven (Rev. v. 9, 12).

Only as we have received Christ into our hearts can we "rejoice in the Lord" as our God and Father. Only thus is our worship a preparation for heaven.

Vers. 1—3.—(Second sermon.) *Methods of worship.* The forms of temple-worship to which this psalm refers were unsuited to the Christian Church, because the gospel leaves no room for a central holy place on earth. The heavenly sanctuary is open to faith, and the whole world has become like the court of God's temple (Heb. ix. 8, 24; John iv. 21, 23). But as our reasons for praising God are not less, but infinitely more, than the Old Testament saints knew, so Christian worship should not fall below,

but rise above theirs. Here are three characters which it should possess: (1) *outward as well as spiritual*; (2) *hearty and joyful*; (3) *collective and public*.

I. **OUTWARD AS WELL AS SPIRITUAL.** All strong emotion seeks and prompts utterance. For grief, because it is often solitary and speechless, God has provided the silent language of tears (sometimes, too, for joy, when too big for words). But the impulse of joy is to shout and sing. Examples: A troop of children when school is over; victors in a race or game; multitude welcoming a sovereign. From the beginning of the gospel, vocal praise, the worship of song, has had a place of honour in the Christian Church (Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16; Acta xvi. 25). What would heaven be without it (Rev. xiv. 2; xv. 3)? God might have given language without song; voice and hearing without music. Man alone of living creatures can produce *music* (for the song of birds is not music. That some birds can be taught tunes proves that they can *perceive* music, but they have no power to *produce* it). It is one of God's choicest gifts, and its highest use is in his praise.

II. **HEARTY AND JOYFUL.** "With a loud noise." The word here used is elsewhere translated "shout" (Numb. xxiii. 21). Also used for the sound of the trumpet (comp. Ps. xcvi. 4—6). Does the value of our praise, then, depend on its noisings? Is God pleased, or man made devout, by noise and shouting? Certainly not. What these passages teach is *heartiness* in praise. We should throw our soul as well as our voice into it. Drawing languor, indolent affectation, mumbling negligence, should be utterly banished. To be silent, except from infirmity (as lack of ear or voice), in God's praise, should be held a disgrace. If "do it heartily" (Col. iii. 23) applies to any duty, surely to this.

III. **COLLECTIVE AND PUBLIC.** When the Apostles Peter and John returned "to their own company," after their noble testimony before the Sanhedrin, we read that "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord" (Acts iv. 24). Not "their voices," but "their voice," which must mean either that one spoke for the rest, or that they joined in holy song; for in music many voices become one. Accordingly, what follows may well be regarded as a psalm of praise and prayer, in which one prophet led and the rest joined in chorus. It is a very significant fact, that neither in the Jewish temple nor in ancient heathen temples was there *harmony* in our sense of the word. The full, rich blending of the four kinds of voice, each in its part, is an art for which the world may thank the Church.

The duty and privilege of praise is one chief lesson of the whole Book of Psalms. It draws to a close, as if with the unrisn sunlight of the new covenant shining on it, with exhortations to universal praise (Pss. cxlviii. 12; cl. 6). This part of public worship, therefore—*praise*—as one of the noblest duties and highest privileges of Christians, is the concern of the whole Church; not to be left to a handful of choristers or a specially excellent voice here and there. Preparation intelligently and harmoniously to join in psalmody should be part of Christian education. *Hearty, skilful, joyful, sympathetic psalmody* is no mean part of our education for heaven.

Ver. 6.—*Creation*. "By the word of the Lord," etc. The Apostle Peter, warning us against applying our hasty reckonings to God's dealings, reminds us that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." This he puts in conjunction with the fact that "by the word of the Lord the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water," and with the declaration that "the heavens and earth which are now, *by the same word* are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment" (2 Pet. iii. 5—8). In like manner St. Paul speaks of the Son of God, "by whom also he made the worlds," as "upholding all things *by the word* of his power" (Heb. i. 2, 3). God's *creative word* is no momentary *fiat*, but a fixed and lasting power and purpose, of which it may be said, as of his written truth, "The Word of God liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23, 24).

I. **THE WORD OF COMMAND**; i.e. the putting forth of Divine *will* and *power*. The fact of creation stands in the forefront of Bible teaching. The *existence* of God is never treated in Scripture as needing argument or proof; it is assumed, as self-evident to every sane and intelligent mind. The starting-point, therefore, of Bible teaching is that all things owe their origin to his will and power. "In the beginning," etc. (Gen.

i. 1). All other being has its being in him (Acts xvii. 24, 28). Scientific men tell us there is a perpetual *dissipation of energy* in the universal frame of things; *q.d.* that all the forces of nature are constantly tending to change into *heat*, and heat is constantly passing away and wasting itself in infinite space. If so, it cannot fly beyond God's presence and control. The unfathomable fountain of all force, physical and spiritual, is with him. He who made all things "in the beginning" can, when he pleases, "make all things new" (Ps. cxix. 89—91).

II. THE WORD OF WISDOM. All man's most laborious discoveries—what he calls his *science*—consist in slowly finding out the truths embodied in God's works. The great astronomer Kepler, enraptured with the wonderful results his calculations revealed, exclaimed, "O God, I think thy thoughts after thee!" Mathematics, astronomy, chemistry—all the sciences—teach us portions of that Divine wisdom on which nature rests. Much of man's wisdom and progress consists in finding out his mistakes. New inventions are superseded by newer. Theories which one generation regards as the most advanced truths, the next generation treats as obsolete and exploded. But the lapse of time brings to light no mistakes, no miscalculations or oversights, in God's work. The history of the past, as far as we can decipher it, shows perpetual progress, but progress for which preparation was made at the very beginning.

III. Therefore it is the WORD OF DIVINE FAITHFULNESS. (1 Pet. iv. 19.) These three—commanding *power*, foreseeing *wisdom*, unchanging *faithfulness*—make up together the great idea of *law*. The laws of nature are the laws of God—"the word of the Lord." The constancy of nature is the image (because the result) of Divine unchangeableness (Jer. xxxi. 35, 36; xxxiii. 20).

INFERENCES. 1. There can be no real opposition between faith and science. Men may misunderstand Scripture or misinterpret nature; but one part of God's truth cannot contradict another. 2. The study of God's works is a religious and Christian duty (measured, of course, by opportunity and ability). The New Testament teaches that the glory of creation is the glory of Christ (John i. 3; Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2). If many students of science are atheists or sceptics, that is their fault or their calamity. Nature is full of God. 3. The more we study the revelation of God in nature, the more we are struck with its silence as to what we most need to know—what only the gospel reveals. "The heavens declare the *glory* of God," but not his *grace*. Is there a God who created all things? Is he almighty, all-wise, good, bountiful, patient, just, unchangeable? Nature, with innumerable voices, cries aloud, "Yes!" But is he merciful to sinners? Will he pardon the breakers of his laws? Is there atonement for sin; forgiveness; restoration; eternal life? Nature is silent. The Bible alone answers these questions (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; 2 Cor. v. 19, 21).

Ver. 11.—*Permanence of Divine purpose*. "The counsel . . . for ever." In this world of change what is there that abides? Can we count on anything as unchangeable? One generation passeth away, and another cometh. Laws, customs, languages, empires, races, decay and perish. Even "the everlasting mountains" are so only by comparison. "The waters wear the stones." "The mountain falling cometh to nought." The answer which our modern science gives to this question is summed up in the word "evolution;" *i.e.* *unfolding*, progress, development. Nothing abides; but all things advance to some higher stage, or decay and are dissipated. Scripture teaches the doctrine of *evolution*, only with this difference—not development of a blind necessity, evolution of law without a Lawgiver, perpetual motion of a self-acting machine that is always winding itself up; but the carrying out of a Divine plan, the unfolding of the eternal thought and all-comprehending purpose of God (vers. 6, 9, 11).

I. GOD ACTS ACCORDING TO SETTLED PLAN, UNCHANGEABLE PURPOSE. 1. Not according to the *sudden exigency* of occasion. "Known unto God," etc. (Acts xv. 18, Authorized Version). Nothing is more incomprehensible, yet nothing more certain, than that God knows the future as perfectly as the present and the past (Heb. iv. 13). Else he neither could have made the world nor could rule it. One great use of Scripture prophecy is to make this plain (Isa. xlv. 21; xlvii. 10). 2. Not according to *blind necessity*. What we call "laws of nature" are the laws which man *discovers* in nature because God has long ago *fixed them* there (Ps. cxix. 89—91). They are unchangeable because he changes not. But to suppose that God's *laws* interfere with God's *will*



is absurd; it is to make God less powerful than man. Men cannot break or suspend the least law of nature, but men use the laws of nature to carry out their will. 3. Not according to *arbitrary caprice*. The will of God, which we are to pray to have done (Matt. vi. 10; xxvi. 39), is guided by perfect wisdom, righteousness, and love. Not simply "his will," but "the counsel of his will" (Eph. i. 11).

II. THIS DIVINE PURPOSE IS UNCHANGEABLE. Change would imply imperfection in the plan or in God himself, want of foresight or instability of purpose (Mal. iii. 6). But the *manifestation* of God's purpose may and must change. The Bible is the history of this manifestation (Eph. iii. 4, 5; Col. i. 26). What we do not need, or could not bear, to know, God still hides (Acts i. 7).

III. THIS DIVINE PURPOSE SHALL FINALLY TRIUMPH over all that oppose it. Even men's wickedness is overruled to bring about (against their will) God's purposes (Acts ii. 23; iii. 18; Ps. lxxvi. 10). To reconcile this all-embracing, persistent, victorious purpose with human freedom and responsibility is beyond our limited power. True wisdom lies in accepting both. But a small part of the great circle of truth is above our horizon.

LESSONS. 1. This truth is the greatest encouragement to prayer. If all were not foreseen and provided for, prayer would be useless. Prayer avails, not to change God's purposes, but as the appointed condition of the fulfilment of his *promises* (1 John v. 14, 15). 2. The resting-place of faith (Dan. iv. 35; Rom. viii. 28).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Joy in God*. In this section of the Commentary we aim at discovering the unity of the psalm, and of dealing with it accordingly, reserving the treatment of specific verses as separate texts, for another department. This psalm has neither title nor author's name appended thereto. It is manifestly an outburst of glad and gladdening song from some Old Testament believer, and is a glorious anticipation of Phil. iv. 4. It is refreshing to the spirit to find that in the olden times there were pious and holy souls, receptive of the revelation which God had even then given of himself, and who could gather up their thoughts in grateful calm as they mused on the perfections of their ever-reigning Lord. In this psalm there are no historic considerations presented, nor is there any individual experience suggested at which we have to look in studying this amazing illustration of joy in God. It is the "itself by itself"—the pure thing, the uplifting of a soul from the cloudland of earth to the sunland of heaven. Here is—

I. AN ENRAPTURING VIEW OF THE GLORY OF OUR REVEALED GOD. We use this word "revealed," as indicated by this psalm, advisedly on two grounds. For (1) the name "Jehovah" (ver. 1) is the name by which God revealed himself to Israel (Exod. vi. 3). The name "I am that I am" at once removes the God of the Hebrews far above all anthropomorphism. Then (2) in ver. 4 we are told, "The Word of the Lord is right;" so that, as the word is the expression of thought, and as expressed thought indicates will, it is here declared that God had made known his will (see Ps. ciii. 7; Heb. i. 1). How far God's early disclosures of himself went, our Lord Jesus Christ tells us (Matt. xxii. 31, 32). And it is by the light from words of God that we read his natural works. Having, then, God revealed by name and by word, what are the contents of that revelation which are here pointed out? 1. *Right*. (Ver. 4.) The Word of God, as given under the Old Testament, was pre-eminently right. As being such, the whole of the hundred and nineteenth psalm extols it. And now no nobler ethical code does the world possess than that given to Moses and the prophets, and confirmed by Christ. 2. *Truth*. (Ver. 4.) *I.e.* faithfulness. As righteousness marks the Word, so fidelity to the Word marks the works of God. 3. *Goodness*. (Ver. 5.) *I.e.* loving-kindness. The earth is *full* of it. The sound eye rejoices in the sunshine; and the pure heart reads the goodness of God everywhere. 4. *Power*. (Vers. 6, 7, 9.) We cannot rejoice in bare power; but when infinite power is in alliance with perfect goodness and with loving-kindness, then we can. 5. *Wisdom*. (Ver. 10.) There is not

<sup>1</sup> See Kirkpatrick's interesting note on ver. 7. Throughout the whole psalm, indeed, his brief notes are most suggestive and helpful. See also Dr. Green on ver. 7.

only a power that sways matter, but a wisdom which controls mind, so that among the nations there can never be any plotting which can frustrate or intercept his plans.

6. *Omniscience.* (Vers. 14, 15.) He espies from afar the hidden thought of every soul (Prov. xv. 3; Ps. cxxxix.). He knows men's hearts, as having created them (ver. 15) "alike," *i.e.* altogether, in one. There are variations in mind, but yet all minds act responsively to some necessary laws of thought inlaid in their original structure.

7. *Steadfast counsels.* (Ver. 11.) This is true of the plans of providence; but it is most gloriously true of the hidden mysteries and triumphs of his grace (1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. iii. 9; Acts xv. 18).

8. *All his counsels are in alliance with a holiness which warrants and invites confidence.* (Ver. 21.) He cannot do wrong; he cannot be unfaithful or unkind (Ps. xcii. 15).

9. *On some he looks with special favour and love.* (Vers. 18, 19; see Ps. xlviii. 25, 26.) Those who trust God most fully and follow him most faithfully will find that their lot is as beautifully ordered for them as if God had no one else to occupy his care. They will be guarded in peril, supplied in need, and comforted in sorrow; the loving glances of a gracious eye and the cheering words from a loving heart will give to such many a song in the night. Let all these nine features of God's glory be put together and looked at in blended sweetness, and see if they will not raise to an ecstasy of delight.

II. THE JOY WHICH UPRIGHT SOULS HAVE IN SUCH A GOD IS UNBOUNDED. Yes.

1. *The joy has uprightness for its condition.* Upright souls! Only such. But this does not mean absolutely perfect men, but men who mourn over the wrong, who have confessed it before God, who have received his pardoning mercy, and who loyally conform their lives to God's holy will and Word, who would not knowingly harbour any sin or ought that would grieve their God—men who have gone, in fact, through the experiences of Ps. xxxii. (of which, indeed, this may possibly be a continuation).

2. *This joy has grace for its resting-place.* (Vers. 18, 22.) "Mercy." The joy would have no ground stable enough if it were settled on any other basis than God himself, nor unless that basis were "mercy." "O God, be merciful to me!" is the cry which goes up from the penitent's lips more and more pleadingly as he moves forward in the pardoned life.

3. *This joy has all that God is, has, and does for its contents.* So the whole psalm teaches us; for the pardoning mercy of God has brought us so near to him that we know there is *for us* such an outpouring of love Divine as makes us infinitely rich for time and eternity.

4. *This joy has boundless hope for its outlook.* (Ver. 22.) As Bishop P-owne well remarks, "hope" indicates the perpetual attitude of a trusting and waiting Church. Believers know that God will do exceeding abundantly for them above all they can ask or think. As the rich disclosures of God under the prophets have advanced to their unveiling in the unsearchable riches of Christ, so will the wonders of Christ in grace move forward to those of Christ in his glory. We yet seek a Fatherland. "God is not ashamed to be called our God, for he hath prepared for us a city."

5. *This joy has prayer for its upward expression.* (Ver. 22, "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us," etc.) Not that this is its only form of expression (for see below), but it is a joy which must and will find outlet in prayer for the constant supply of that mercy which feeds and sustains it.

III. THE JOY IS SUCH THAT IT MAY WELL RIPEN INTO A HOLY FELLOWSHIP OF MUSIC AND SONG. Here in vers. 1—3 the psalmist calls on all upright souls to join him in sounding forth the praises of the Lord.

1. *God having taken off all our burdens of guilt and care, the tongue is set free for praise.*

2. *A common joy in God may well suggest a grand concert of song.* Fellowship in trouble is soothing; fellowship in peril is uniting; fellowship in need touches common sympathy; fellowship in gladness creates a grand inspiration and a mighty burst of praise.

3. *In giving vent to our joy musical instruments may be "skilfully" made subservient thereto.* (Ver. 3.) To plead against this verse that we live in another dispensation, is not in place; for musical instruments in the hands of sanctified men are the servants of the Spirit, and we do but utilize God's own world of harmony when we press them into the service of celebrating redeeming love.

4. *The right use and ample enjoyment in hallowed mirth, as we celebrate the praises of the Lord, may be made a holy and blessed means of grace.* It is of no mean importance to recruit the bodily powers for God by means of the enjoyment of sacred music and song. And if, indeed, Christian people of musical tastes would seek to sanctify their special powers for God and his Church, many an

abuse of their talents might be prevented, and many a holy outlet for their use secured. Well might Frances R. Havergal write—

“Take my voice, and let me sing  
Always, only, for my King.”

5. *The largest scope for the noblest music* is opened up by the wonders of redeeming love. Poetry, painting, sculpture, music,—all are grandest when inspired by the Cross.—C.

Vers. 1—22.—This is a *hymn of praise to God*, as at once the Almighty Creator and Ruler of the world, and the Protector of his chosen people. Ver. 12 may be regarded as the pivot on which the whole psalm turns. What was true ideally, and in part of Israel, is true in fact and perfectly of God's people. “Blessed”—

I. BECAUSE THE LORD IS THEIR God. The prophets delight to mark the contrast between the gods of the heathen and Jehovah (Deut. xxxii. 31; Ps. lxxxvi. 8; Isa. xl. 18—25). The vital difference between the false and the true was brought out powerfully in Egypt (Exod. viii. 10), and with still more intense and dramatic effect on Mount Carmel in the day of Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 24). No doubt some of the heathen attained to high views of duty, but amongst the people it was otherwise. As has been said, their gods were like themselves—

“Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,  
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, and lust.”

But our God is the living and true God. His *character* commands our highest admiration (vers. 1—3). His *Word* and his *works* call forth our most devoted homage and praise (vers. 4—11). Idolaters and all with idol-loving hearts may be constrained to say, in the day of their trouble, “They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?” (Judg. xviii. 24). But no power can take away *our* God. He says to us, “I will never leave thee.” And we cry to him with exulting faith, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Ps. lxxiii. 23—28). To Israel God appealed as the God of Abraham, and claimed their obedience as the Lord their God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt (Exod. iii. 6; xx. 1); but he stands in a nearer relationship, and has higher claims upon us, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. i. 3, 7; 1 Pet. i. 3, 7).

II. BECAUSE UNDER GOD'S GOVERNMENT THEY ARE BEING FORMED TO THE CHARACTER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Righteousness is the great want of the world. Get people made righteous—right in their being and their life, and there would be an end to the great evils that afflict society. Righteousness is the craving of all consciences and the hope of all troubled hearts. God's great aim is to make his people righteous. For this end he has given his Law; for this he sent his Son into the world; for this, as the potter with the clay, he is continually working in his gracious providence, “fashioning” the hearts of men. Well, therefore, has Paul said, “We are his workmanship” (Eph. ii. 10). God is blessed because he is righteous; and he would have his people made happy after the same fashion (Isa. xxxii. 17). “Righteousness exalteth a nation” (Prov. xiv. 34); and this holds true also of individuals. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled” (Matt. v. 6).

III. BECAUSE THEY HAVE A GREAT FUTURE BEFORE THEM. Nations have their decline and fall. Even Israel, because unfaithful, have been scattered (Deut. xxix. 24—28); but the true Israel shall be under the eye and the keeping of the Lord for ever. They are his own inheritance (cf. Eph. i. 18). Therefore they are encouraged to “hope,” to “wait,” to “trust.” Their golden age is not in the past, but in the future. What Jacob said on his death-bed may be said with joy by all his true children, “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!” (Gen. xlix. 18; cf. Luke ii. 28—32; 1 Pet. i. 10—13).—W. F.

Vers. 1—11.—*A call to praise God*. The psalm is anonymous, and was composed apparently to celebrate some deliverance of the nation from heathen oppression, resulting from God's interposition and without war. Vers. 1—3 are a summons to

praise God, the song to be accompanied with instrumental music. God is to be praised—

I. AS THE GOD OF REVELATION. (Vers. 4, 5.) 1. His *Word* is upright, always fulfilling itself. 2. All his *conduct* is faithful and righteous. 3. All his *manifestations* of himself are full of loving-kindness.

II. AS THE CREATOR OF THE WORLD. (Vers. 6—9.) 1. His *Word*—the breath of his mouth—was sufficient for the creation of the heavens. 2. He gathered together the waters of the sea. 3. Such manifestations of his power ought to fill us with reverence and awe. Study God's *works* as well as his *Word*. In the nineteenth verse we have the thought of the sixth verse repeated.

III. AS THE IRRESISTIBLE RULER IN THE HISTORY OF MEN. (Vers. 10, 11.) Contrast here between what God does with the thoughts and counsels of men—bringing them to nought—and what he does with his own—making them to stand fast to all generations. The counsels which he brings to nought are evil counsels; he prospers and establishes the counsels of the righteous, and fulfils his own plans and purposes.—S.

Vers. 12—22.—*What God's people possess in him.* The call to praise God is supported by a setting forth of *that which his people possess in him*. The theme of this second part of the psalm is set forth in the twelfth verse, "Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah."

I. BECAUSE GOD IS THE CREATOR HE HAS THE MOST PERFECT KNOWLEDGE. (Vers. 13—15.) He not only observes men's doings, but knows their hearts, as having created them. You cannot know a man perfectly from his acts; you must know his thoughts and purposes to know his character.

II. HIS PEOPLE HAVE IN GOD A STRONGER DEFENCE THAN THE GREATEST WORLDLY POWER WOULD BE. (Vers. 16—12.) 1. *The victory of the king and the safety of the warrior are not their own works.* Even the war-horse, a thing that promises much in strength, can in reality do nothing apart from God's overruling power. 2. *The eye of God is directed towards those that fear him*, to deliver them from danger and death.

III. THE CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGES GOD AS ITS HELP, ITS SHIELD, AND ITS SOURCE OF JOY. (Vers. 20—22.) 1. *The Church waits for God.* (Ver. 20.) To be its Help and Shield. 2. *The Church rejoices in the holiness of God.* If he were not perfectly good we should have to tremble with terror and not rejoice. 3. *The Church hopes in God.* Hope has been the attitude of the Church through all the ages. It must be our personal attitude towards God in Christ. "Which hope we have as the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," etc. What can sufferers do but *hope*?—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXXIV.

THIS is the third of the alphabetical psalms, and appears to have a special connection with the second of them, Ps. xxv. Like that psalm, it omits the *vau*, and has a second *pe* at the end, which, moreover, is furnished by the same word (*podeh*). According to the title, it is a psalm of David, and written on the particular occasion of his dismissal by Achish (Abimelech), when he had foolishly feigned himself mad in consequence of what he had heard the servants of Achish say (1 Sam. xxi. 10—15). As there is nothing in the psalm specially suggestive of this occasion, the statement in the title must, it would seem, embody an ancient tradition. It is a composition of

a mixed character, being in part didactic (vers. 11—22), in part a psalm of thanksgiving (vers. 1—10). Metrically, it has been divided into four strophes (Kay), the first and second of five verses each, the third and fourth each of six verses. But there is no corresponding division of the matter.

Ver. 1.—I will bless the Lord at all times; *i.e.* even in times of adversity. If the statement in the title may be relied upon, David's fortunes were now at the lowest ebb. He had fled from the court of Saul on finding that Saul was determined to put him to death (1 Sam. xx. 31). He had hoped to find a safe refuge with Achish, but had been disappointed. He was on the point of becoming a fugitive and an outlaw, a dweller in dens and caves of the earth

(1 Sam. xxii. 1). He had as yet no body of followers. We cannot but admire his piety in composing, at such a time, a song of thanksgiving to God. His praise shall continually be in my mouth (comp. Ps. xcii. 1, 2; cxlv. 1, 2; cxlvi. 1, 2; Eph. v. 20; 1 Thess. v. 18). "Continually" must be understood as meaning either "every day" or "many times every day," but must not be taken quite literally, or the business of life would be at a stand.

Ver. 2.—My soul shall make her boast in the Lord (comp. Ps. xlv. 8; and for the meaning of "boasting in the Lord," see Jer. ix. 24, "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which executeth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth"). The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. They will anticipate joy for themselves when they hear of my rejoicing.

Ver. 3.—O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his Name together. Not content with praising God in his own person, the psalmist calls on Israel generally to praise the Lord with him. He then proceeds to assign reasons why God should be praised (vers. 4—10).

Ver. 4.—I sought the Lord, and he heard me. To "seek the Lord" is not merely to trust in him, but to fly to him, and make our requests of him in our troubles. David apparently speaks of some special occasion on which he "sought the Lord," and some special request which he made of him, but does not tell us what the occasion or request was. We may presume that it was in some way connected with his "escape to the cave Adullam" (1 Sam. xxii. 1). And delivered me from all my fears; literally, *from all the things which I feared* (comp. Isa. lxvi. 4).

Ver. 5.—They looked unto him, and were lightened; or, *were brightened* (Hengstenberg); *i.e.* had their countenances lighted up and cheered. And their faces were not ashamed. As they would have been if God had made no response to their appeal (comp. Ps. xxv. 2, 3; lxxiv. 21).

Ver. 6.—This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. Almost a repetition of ver. 4, but in the third person instead of the first. The "poor man" intended is David himself, not an ideal poor man. Otherwise the demonstrative "this" (*τῷ*) would not have been employed.

Ver. 7.—The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. According to some commentators (Rosenmüller, 'Four Friends,' and others), the expression, "angel of the Lord," is here used as a collective, and means the angels generally. With this

certainly agrees the statement that the angel "encampeth round about them that fear him;" and the illustration from 2 Kings vi. 14—18 is thus exactly apposite. But others deny that "the angel of the Lord" has ever a collective sense, and think a single personality must necessarily be intended, which they regard as identical with "the captain of the Lord's host," who appeared to Joshua (Josh. v. 14, 15), and "the angel of the Lord's presence" spoken of by Isaiah (lxiii. 9); so Kay, Hengstenberg, Bishop Horsley, Professor Alexander, and the 'Speaker's Commentary.' When pressed to say how this one angel can "encamp round" a number of persons, they reply that, of course, he has his subordinates with him—a "spangled host," that "keep watch in squadrons bright;" and that he is said to do what they do, which is no doubt quite in accordance with ordinary modes of speech. Thus, however, the two expositions become nearly identical, since, according to both, it is the angelic *host* which "encamps around" the faithful.

Ver. 8.—O taste and see that the Lord is good; *i.e.* put the matter to the test of experience (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 3). There is no other way of really knowing how good God is. Blessed is the man that trusteth in him (comp. Ps. ii. 12; lxxiv. 12; Prov. xvi. 20; Isa. xxx. 18; Jer. xvii. 7). Trust in God is a feeling which is blessed in itself. God also showers blessings on such as trust in him.

Ver. 9.—O fear the Lord, ye his saints. Fear of God, a reverent and godly fear, will always accompany trust in God, such as God approves. The saints of God both love and fear him (comp. Ps. xxxi. 23). There is no want to them that fear him, since God supplies all their wants.

Ver. 10.—The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger. Some suppose the "young lions" here to represent the proud and violent, as in Job iv. 10. But it is simpler to take the present passage literally. In God's animal creation even the strongest suffer want for a time, and have no remedy; his human creatures need never be in want, since they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. It is open to them to "seek the Lord" at any time.

Vers. 11—22.—The second, didactic, part of the psalm here begins. The writer assumes the *role* of the teacher, and, addressing his readers as "sons," undertakes to "teach them the fear of the Lord" (ver. 11), or, in other words, to point out to them in what true religion consists. This he does in two remarkable verses (vers. 13, 14); after which he proceeds, in the re-

mainder of the psalm, to give reasons which may incline them to the practice of it (vers. 15—22). The reasons resolve themselves into two main grounds—the tender love and care of God for the righteous (vers. 15, 17—20, 22), and his hostility to and punishment of the wicked (vers. 16, 21).

Ver. 11.—Come, ye children, hearken unto me (comp. Prov. iv. 1; viii. 32; 1 John ii. 1, 18; iii. 18; iv. 4, etc.). I will teach you the fear of the Lord; *i.e.* I will teach you the nature of true religion. Note the absence from what follows of any merely legal requirements, and the simple insistence on right moral conduct (vers. 13, 14).

Ver. 12.—What men is he that desireth life? Like most moralists, David begins with asking men—Do they wish for happiness? If so, and he assumes that it is so (comp. Arist., 'Eth. Nic.' I. i.—vii.), then he will point them out the way to it. And loveth many days, that he may see good? Mere life, mere length of days, would not suffice for men, would be no object of desire, unless it were assumed that the days would bring them "good"—in other words, that they would be happy days.

Ver. 13.—Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. If the end be happiness, the means will be right moral conduct; and, first of all, right government of the tongue. Sins of the tongue are numerous, and abundantly noted in the Psalms (Psa. v. 9: x. 7; xii. 3; xv. 3; l. 19; lvii. 4; lxxiii. 8, 9, etc.). They are more difficult to avoid than any others; they cling closer to us; they are scarcely ever wholly laid aside. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (Jas. iii. 2). The meek Moses "spoke unadvisedly with his lips" (Ps. cvi. 33). Job "darkened counsel by words without knowledge" (Job xxxviii. 2). St. Peter's words on one occasion drew upon him the rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. xvi. 23).

Ver. 14.—Depart from evil, and do good. From words the psalmist proceeds to acts, and, in the briefest possible way, says all that can be said. First, he enjoins negative goodness—"depart from evil," *i.e.* do nothing that is wrong; break no laws of God, no command of conscience; have a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man. Secondly, he requires positive goodness—"Do good;" *i.e.* actively perform the will of God from the heart; discharge every duty; practise every virtue; carry out the precepts of the moral law in every particular. Seek peace, and pursue it. It is not clear why this virtue—one of many—is specially enjoined; but

probably some circumstances of the time made the recommendation advisable.

Ver. 15.—The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous (comp. Job xxxvi. 7; Psa. xxxiii. 18; 1 Pet. iii. 12; and see the comment on Ps. xxxiii. 18). And his ears are open unto their cry. The specific statement of ver. 6 is now generalized. What God had done in the case of the psalmist, he will do in all other similar cases. His eyes will be open to his people's needs, and his ears attentive unto their prayers (2 Chron. vi. 40).

Ver. 16.—The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. Conversely, God turns away his face from the wicked, and punishes them by causing their very memory to perish from among men (comp. Job xviii. 17; Ps. cix. 13; Prov. x. 7). The natural wish for continuance, which causes men to build themselves monuments, and erect other great works, and delight in offspring, and seek to establish their families, and create entails, and have their portraits taken, and "call the lands after their own names" (Ps. xlix. 11), was especially strong in the Hebrew race, and made the threat that their remembrance should be cut off peculiarly terrible to them.

Ver. 17.—The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth; literally, *they cry, and the Lord heareth*. "Cry," which by the ordinary rules of grammar should have for its subject the "evil-doers" of the preceding verse, must, it is obvious from the context, refer to the "righteous" of ver. 15, who are the predominant subject of the entire passage (vers. 15—22). And delivereth them out of all their troubles (comp. ver. 19 and Ps. liv. 7).

Ver. 18.—The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. On the value in God's sight of a broken and contrite heart, see Ps. li. 17; and on his mercy towards the truly contrite, see Ps. cxlvii. 3; Isa. lvii. 15; lxix. 2. He "is nigh" to such persons, he "dwells with" them, "looks to them," "revives their heart," "heals" them, "saves" them.

Ver. 19.—Many are the afflictions of the righteous (comp. Job xxxvi. 8—10; Acts xiv. 22; 1 Cor. xv. 19; 2 Tim. iii. 12; Heb. xi. 33—38; xii. 5—10, etc.). The righteous suffer afflictions because they are so imperfectly righteous. They need purging, purifying, chastening, to rid them of the dross and defilement of sin which still clings to them, and from which they are never wholly freed while they continue in the flesh. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). We must, like the Captain

of our salvation, be "made perfect through suffering" (Heb. ii. 10). But the Lord delivereth him out of them all. When they have done their appointed work of purging, purifying, instructing, improving, or whatever else their work may be, God removes the afflictions with which he has visited us or allowed us to be visited, ultimately, when he takes us to himself, mercifully delivering us "out of them all."

Ver. 20.—He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. The "bones" are put for the entire frame, or body, of a man (comp. Ps. vi. 2; xxxi. 10; xxxii. 3; xxxviii. 3; xlii. 10; cii. 3). God "keepeth," i.e. watches over, keeps from harm, the entire persons of the righteous, letting no hurt touch them, but such as he permits and sees to be needful. In using the phrase, "not one of them is broken," the psalmist probably alludes to Exod. xii. 46 and Numb. ix. 12, taking the Paschal lamb as a type of innocence, and so of godliness.

Ver. 21.—Evil shall slay the wicked. His

own misconduct shall bring destruction upon the wicked man—destruction of the body in many cases (Ps. vii. 15, 16), in all, if he persists in his wickedness, destruction of the soul. And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate; rather, *shall be held guilty* (comp. Ps. v. 10, and the comment *ad loc.*).

Ver. 22.—The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants (comp. Ps. xxv. 22; cxxx. 8). Some translate, "The Lord delivers," etc. But the LXX. have *λυτρώσεται*. And the verb used means primarily, as Dr. Kay says, "to sever," then "to set free, release, emancipate; especially to set free by paying a price; to redeem, or ransom." And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate; rather, *shall be held guilty, or shall be condemned*—the same word as in the preceding verse (comp. Rom. viii. 33, 34). Those whom God has redeemed he justifies, and saves from all condemnation. They are "passed from death unto life" (John v. 24).

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*A duty, a privilege, a purpose.* "I will bless," etc. A Christian man, burdened and oppressed with many troubles, was seeking relief in prayer. But even prayer was difficult. Suddenly these words came into his mind, "I will bless the Lord at all times." "At all times?" he thought; "then now." He began to think of his reasons for blessing God, and as the scale in which he weighed God's mercies grew heavy, the scale in which he weighed his trials grew light by comparison. His sorrowful prayer was turned into thanksgiving; and he rose up strengthened and comforted. These words express a duty, a privilege, a purpose.

I. A DUTY—of perpetual obligation. God's mercies are "new every morning" (Lam. iii. 23), nay, every moment. Some signal instance may be the Moses' rod to make the stream of thankfulness gush forth, as, according to the title, was the case with this psalm. But as the clock is silently marking time every moment, and not only when it strikes the hour, so the silent sense of God's goodness should never die out of the Christian's heart, though there are special times for his lips to utter praise. Every breath, every heart-beat, is a new gift of life (Acts xvii. 28; Ps. cvii. 1, 8).

II. A PRIVILEGE—of the noblest kind. If it is true that every duty brings reward in some sense with it, this is eminently true here. 1. God accepts our praise, as glorifying him (Ps. l. 23). 2. Praise hallows our enjoyments (Deut. vii. 11, 12); and brings sunshine into our darkest seasons (Acts xvi. 25). 3. It is the noblest employment, that in which we rise nearest to heaven. Not seeking, as in prayer, from God, but striving to render somewhat to him, we lay our hearts open for his best blessings.

III. A thoughtful, wise, and holy PURPOSE. The fulfilment of this duty and exercise of this privilege are not to be left to transient impulse or to rare occasions. "I will . . . at all times." There are set occasions when "praise is comely." And there are sunny seasons, when God puts "a new song" in our mouth. But the text points to the habitual culture of a thankful spirit.

CONCLUSION. 1. Forget not God's mercies. Review them. 2. Place over against them thy unworthiness. 3. Let the heart be often lifted up in thankfulness, when the lips are silent and the hands and eyes busy with the world. "At all times;" "for his mercy endureth for ever."

Ver. 8.—*The test of experience.* "Oh, taste and see!" The glory of our age is its *experimental science*. The method of the old philosophers, against which Lord Bacon

wrote, was to assume certain principles as true, and reason down to the facts. The new method, to which all the victories of modern science are due, is to reason back from facts to principles; first carefully observing, then testing your conclusions; first *learning* by experience, then *verifying* by experience. This method, which in human science is but some three centuries old, is the method of the Bible from the beginning. God has led his Church step by step; taught his children by experience (Gal. iii. 23—26). The lessons of the Bible are the voice of experience. The aim of the Gospels, as of the entire Bible, is not merely to convey instruction, but to create a supernatural experience. And its invitation to each of us is to put Divine truth to the test, and make this experience our own. "Oh, taste and see," etc.! (1) The goodness of God can be truly known only by personal experience. (2) If there be any truth to which experience bears convincing testimony, it is this: "that the Lord is good." (3) This experience is within reach of every one to whom the gospel is preached.

I. IF YOU WOULD SEE, YOU MUST TASTE; AND IF YOU DO TASTE, YOU WILL SEE. Certainty is to be had, and this is the road to it. "Taste" is the most expressive image for personal experience. It is personal. Tastes differ. What to one is delicious, to another is insipid, to a third nauseous. To taste fully, you must not slightly touch with your tongue, but eat or drink—receiving its substance. So, in Scripture language, to *taste death* means to die. To taste God's goodness means to receive and enjoy it in heart-felt experience (Rom. v. 5). For example: 1. God's goodness in *pardon*ing sin can be known only by the pardoned sinner—by actual repentance and faith. Illust.: Matt. ix. 2—7. 2. God's goodness in *answering prayer* can be known only by those who pray (ver. 6). Illust.: Disobedient, spendthrift, runaway son, writing in sore extremity from a foreign land to his father. Under the sea, over the hills and plains, the wire carries the swift message, "Come home. Money sent. All forgiven." That son knows his father's heart as he never knew it before. 3. The goodness of God, *revealed and stored in the Bible*, can be known only by long study and diligent search (Ps. cxix. 97, 103). Ps. cxix. 72 would be unmeaning cant in the mouth of a good many Christians. They are on *visiting terms* with their Bible; know it as you know one whom you meet daily in the street and call on for a few minutes now and then. Spend a day with him in his home or yours, talking over your troubles, and you will learn what twenty years of morning calls would never teach.

II. EXPERIENCE HAS NO Surer LESSON THAN THIS: "THE LORD IS GOOD." The Bible is our great storehouse of experience (Ps. cxvi. 1; 2 Tim. i. 12). Christian experience in all ages continues and confirms this testimony—the most remarkable body of practical testimony on record ('Basis of Faith,' pp. 358—360). Our *lack of experience* constitutes no reason for questioning the reality of this experience, or doubting the truth to which it bears witness. Truth is truth, believed or not. The earth went round before Copernicus was born; and still would, if all men relapsed into the old superstition that it is immovable. The world would be full of God's goodness, though all were idolaters or atheists (Acts xiv. 17). But personal experience begets invincible certainty (John ix. 25).

III. IF THIS EXPERIENCE BE NOT YOURS, IT OUGHT TO BE; IT MAY BE. God offers it. These words are an invitation—a warrant. Beware of turning them into an upbraiding—a condemnation (John v. 40; Lam. iv. 2; Luke xix. 42). Are you young, happy, prosperous? Thank God for his goodness. But he has better gifts, which *will last* when these fail (Matt. vi. 19). Are you poor, friendless, sorrowful (Isa. lv. 1; Matt. xi. 28)? Are you lost, helpless against temptation, burdened with sin? Oh, taste and see the goodness God waits to pour out upon you (Rev. xx. 17; Rom. x. 11—13)!

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Life's experiences turned to manifold uses.*<sup>1</sup> There is no sufficient reason for severing this psalm from the detail of history to which its title refers; and it is

<sup>1</sup> Another direction in which the unity of this psalm may be made use of in pulpit exposition would be, "The experiences of the fathers recorded for the use of their children: a sermon to the young."



much to be wished that its writer had uniformly turned his own experience to a use as wise as that which he here urges upon others.<sup>1</sup> But David's pen might be golden, though sometimes his spirit was leaden; and we may study with great advantage the ideal of life which he sets before us, learning from his experience how *we* may realize that ideal, even though, in such a dimly lighted and corrupt age as his, he fell beneath it. We, who have far more than David's privileges, ought to rise to a level far beyond that to which he attained. Let us first note the experience here recorded, and then see how varied are the uses to be made thereof.

I. HERE IS A TOUCHING RECORD OF LIFE'S EXPERIENCE. In many respects it is such a one as thousands on thousands of God's people may have passed through, and may be passing through now. If we number the points of experience one by one, the preacher may expand such as may be most appropriate to any case or cases with which he may be dealing. Here is: 1. *A first line of experience—man wanting help from God.* (1) *Trouble.* (Ver. 6.) A general term, yet conveying often the idea of straits, narrowness, and perplexity. This may arise from bodily weakness, domestic trouble, personal bereavement, or any other of those manifold causes of anxiety to which we are liable. (2) *Fear.* (Ver. 4.) The dread of the future is often a heavier care than the distress of the present. How often would it be a great relief if we could see the forthcoming issue of things! But this cannot be. Hence fears arise, and we are tempted to say, "I shall one day perish." (3) *Looking up.* (Ver. 5.) We may, we can, look up above our weakness and helplessness to One who is a "Stronghold in the day of trouble" (Ps. lxi. 2; cxxi. 1). Note: It is a part of the high and holy education of the saints that trouble teaches them to look up; and thus their whole natures become elevated, as they feel and know that they belong to a higher world than this. (4) *Crying.* (Ver. 6; see Ps. xviii. 6.) In our darkest hours we know to whom we speak (Ps. lxii. 1). However dark the night and lonely the path, the child cannot help crying, "Father!" even when he cannot see him. (5) *Seeking.* (Ver. 4.) This is a prolongation of the cry. It indicates the attitude of the soul, continuously directed towards the great Friend and Helper. (6) *All this is in common with others.* (Ver. 5.) "They looked," etc. Not one alone, but millions, are at each moment looking up trustfully and hopefully, away from life's cares and sorrows, to him who ruleth over all. Hence we need not wonder at: 2. *A second line of experience—God granting the help that is implored.* As there are six stages along the first, so are there six features of the second. (1) *The prayer is heard.* (Vers. 4, 6.) Here is a grand field for exploration—the Divine answers to prayer. To enumerate these would require volumes. The saint may well store them up in his memory for the encouragement of troubled ones afterwards. If we did but "give others the sunshine," and "tell Jesus the rest," how rich would be the tokens of mercy with which we should rise from our knees! (2) *Angelic ministry is granted.* (Ver. 7.) The existence and ministry of angels are clearly revealed in the Word of God. Abraham; Jacob; Elijah; Daniel (Heb. i. 14; Ps. lxxviii. 17). The phrase, "delivereth them" is equivalent to "sets them free." (3) *Supplies are sent.* (Vers. 9, 10.) It is one of the testimonies most frequently given to those who visit God's people in trouble, that supplies are sent to them exactly as they require them (Ps. xxxvii. 25). (4) *Deliverance is sent down.* (Vers. 4, 7.) God, in trouble, makes and shows "a way of escape." The dart has been turned aside just as it has seemed to be on the point of striking. (5) *The face has been brightened.* (Ver. 5.) The anxious look departs when help comes; a lightened heart makes a brightened face. (6) *Consequently, it is proved that those who wait on God will not be put to shame.* (Ver. 5, Revised Version.) No! it cannot be. The covenant of God's promise is "ordered in all things, and sure." Not from one alone, but from a great multitude which no man can number, will the testimony come. "Not one thing hath failed of all that the Lord hath spoken." "Thus saith the Lord, They shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Fausset's remarks on this psalm, and Dr. Maclaren's reference to its historic origin. See Kirkpatrick's introduction.

<sup>2</sup> "The angel" (in the singular), not simply 'angels,' suggests the angel of the covenant: (Dr. Green).

<sup>3</sup> See Hengstenberg and Perowne hereon.

## II. THESE VARIED EXPERIENCES OF LIFE ARE HERE TURNED TO MANIFOLD USES.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Towards God.* (Vers. 1, 2.) The psalmist vows that, having such manifold proof of what God is to him, and of his faithfulness to all his promises, his life shall be a perpetual song of praise; that he will make his boast in God's goodness and grace, so that those who have, like him, been in the depths of affliction, may also, like him, be brought forth into a wealthy place. Note: Deliverances brought about in answer to prayer should be followed by long-continued and grateful praise. 2. *Towards the saints.* The psalmist (1) exhorts the saints to join him in thankful song (ver. 3). (2) He bids them try for themselves how good the Lord is (ver. 8), and he would have them know the blessedness of those who trust in him (ver. 8). (3) He bids them loyally obey their God: this is what is meant by the word "fear" in ver. 9: not a fear of dread or of servility, but of loyal and obedient reverence. Note: However severe the pressure or great the trouble, we never need depart from the strict line of obedience to God. (4) He assures them that no loyal souls shall ever be deserted (vers. 9, 10). God will see to it that his faithful ones have all needful supplies. 3. *Towards all who have life before them.* (Vers. 11, 12.) (1) He invites the young to come and listen to him, as out of the depths of his own experience he would show them the value of a godly life. (2) He propounds a question, which may well evoke a response in many a young aspiring heart (ver. 12). See the use to which the Apostle Peter puts this passage (1 Pet. iii. 10—16). (3) He gives a clear and definite answer, directing them how to govern the lips and the feet. The lips are to shun guile, and to speak peace and truth. The feet are to avoid evil, and to press after righteousness. (4) He lays down for them a number of *axiomata*, which may well be their guide through life. (a) That the Lord does hear and answer prayer (vers. 15, 17—20). The experience of the faithful gives an overwhelming amount of proof of this. (b) That in pressing on in life, they will find God's judgments abroad in the earth, making a distinction between those who serve him and those who serve him not; rewarding one and condemning the other (ver. 21, Revised Version). (c) That Divine deliverances will compass the righteous around (ver. 22, Revised Version). Loyal souls will ever be receiving new proofs of the goodness of the Lord, and of the blessedness of such as put their trust in him! "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion!"

Note: 1. Amid all the changeful currents of human thought and sentiment, there are ever, ever, in all ages, climes, and lands, these two great lines of indisputable fact (vers. 15, 16), to which we do well to take heed—that the Lord is on the side of good, and that "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." No perplexity in the mazes of metaphysical or theological controversy ought ever to conceal or obscure these plain facts from view. 2. It behoves the young to profit by the experience of the old; for, though no two experiences are precisely the same in all details, and though each one must bear his own burden, yet the lives of our fathers, as rehearsed to us by them, do set forth clearly and distinctly certain great principles according to which God governed and guided them—principles which are the same in every age, and which we cannot ignore, save at imminent peril both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. 3. It behoves us to treasure up the experiences of life, to recount and to record them for the use and help of those who have yet to set out on life's journey. We know not how our young ones may be exposed in life. Gladly would we give them the constant screen of home. But that cannot be. Out into the world they must go. With God's Spirit in their hearts, they are safe anywhere. Without God, they are safe nowhere. We need not talk at them nor try to preach religion obnoxiously to them; but we may, we can, we must, tell them of our God and Saviour, telling them how he has helped us, and will help all who follow him; that they, too, may "taste and see how good the Lord is"!—C.

Vers. 1—10.—*Links of grace.* I. In this hymn we have first of all PRAISE. Praise is not an impulse, or an outburst of enthusiasm soon to die out, but it is the expression of the heart and the exercise of the life. It is good to have stated

<sup>1</sup> There is enough in this psalm (and, we hope, in this expository homily thereon) to suggest twenty pulpit expositions; but we are compelled to aim at the extreme of compression.

times for praise, but when the soul is in true fellowship with God it will find "continual" reason for praising him. "Praise" is for "all times," because God fills "all times." Thanksgiving has respect to special times, and to what God has done for us, but praise, in its highest sense, is called forth by contemplation of God, as he is in himself—infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his Being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," and if we truly fear him we shall learn the "secret" of praising him "continually."

II. From praise the psalmist proceeds to **CONFESSION**. He does not speak of himself. When he does so it is not to exalt, but to humble himself. "Boasting is excluded." But he speaks of God, and proclaims with gratitude and joy his glorious Name. Whosoever we exalt God, there will be sure to be sympathizers. The confession of our faith will call forth like confessions from others, and "the humble shall be glad." When Paul was converted there were some who were "amazed," and others who were "afraid;" but when they knew the truth, "that he which persecuted the Churches in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed," then, says Paul, "they glorified God in me" (Gal. i. 23).

III. The psalmist next advances to **FELLOWSHIP**. (Ver. 3.) "It is not good for man to be alone." This holds true of religion. There is something inspiring and comforting in being associated with others in worship. What we have found true, others also have found true; what we have seen of the glory of God, others also have seen, and with one mind and one heart we can rejoice together. We cannot by anything we do make God greater than he is, but we can "magnify" him as we make his glory more widely known; we can "exalt his Name" as we make his character stand higher in the sight of men, and as we more fully manifest our devotion to him as the Supreme Object of our trust and love. Thus not only with God's people on earth, but "with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify God's glorious Name."

IV. Lastly, we find here **GRATEFUL COMMEMORATION OF DELIVERANCE**. First the psalmist speaks for himself (ver. 4). But what is true of one is true of many (ver. 5). Let each of us put himself in "this poor man's" place. Recall the peril and the prayer. Give thanks for the gracious deliverance. There may have been times when we too may have been in sore straits. In our perplexity and fear we may have resorted to our own devices, and stained our souls with sin. But God is merciful. He did not cast us off. When we cried to him, he forgave us our iniquity, and delivered us from all our fears. God's deliverances bring gladness. We see in them the outshining of his love. We have looked to him in faith, and he has looked on us in mercy. His response has been quick and gracious—as when the wounded Israelites looked to the brazen serpent, and were healed (Numb. xxi. 9); as when Gideon looked to God, and was made strong (Judg. vi. 13, 14). There is not only the grateful acknowledgment of past deliverances, but the sweet sense of security for all time to come, under the loving guardianship of God (ver. 27). Whether we take "the angel" here as one of the angelic host, or as the angel of Jehovah, the great Head and Lord of all, the meaning is the same. The great truth taught is the same which we find so often in the New Testament, as in the Hebrews, where it is said of the angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14); and in John's Gospel, where we find our Lord saying, concerning his people, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" (John x. 28).—W. F.

Vers. 8—10.—*Proving what is good.* There are two things in this exhortation

I. A **CALL TO MAKE TRIAL OF RELIGION**. The spirit of religion is, "The Lord is good." But how are we to know this? Not by hearing, or inquiring, or believing on the word of others, but by making trial for ourselves. This is in accordance with reason and practical experience. The best way to find out whether anything is really good is to subject it to the test of trial. Experience is founded on experiment. The knowledge thus acquired can be safely acted upon. So it is in human life. It is the friend we have found kind and helpful in time of need that we trust. So it is also in religion. "Taste and see:" this is the settled order. If we act in this way, the result will be sure, and we shall joyfully add our witness to that of others, "The Lord is good:

blessed is the man that trusteth in him." This call, "Taste and see," is the call of Christ in the gospel. Those who hear it must make a choice. They must hear or refuse. But considering who it is that gives the call, and the manifold and powerful arguments by which it is enforced, surely it would be wise and reasonable to take Christ at his word, and to make honest trial of his religion. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God" (John vii. 17, Revised Version). Try the word, try prayer, try the Christian life, try if Christ is to be trusted; not until you have done this can you say whether God is good or not.

II. A CHARGE TO LIVE UP TO THE HIGHEST STANDARD OF RELIGION. "Oh, fear the Lord, ye his saints." This is due to God. We are not our own, to live as we like. We belong to God, and are bound to live according to his Law. God says to us, "Ye are my witnesses." This is necessary to our true welfare. The very name "saints" implies that we have been separated from the world, that we have been called unto holiness. But holiness and happiness are indissoluble. The more we "fear God" the more shall we advance in holiness, and the more we advance in holiness the more shall we enjoy of true happiness. "Want" there will be to us as to others of many things, but we learn to be content with such things as we have, knowing that God is with us, and that he will withhold no "good thing" from us (Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Heb. iv. 16). This is the best way of commending religion to others. We influence others more by example than by precept. The more perfectly we live and act as God's saints, keeping truth and doing right always, serving others in love, following peace and holiness, in a word, the more perfectly we live and act in the spirit of Christ, the greater will be our influence for good in the world. What we have tried and found good, we can honestly commend. What we have proved, and are continually showing in its beneficent effect on our own character and life, to be of the highest worth and virtue, must have a powerful claim to the faith of all reasonable and right thinking men. Let men say of a Christian, "If there be a saint on earth, that is one;" and the next thing will be, "If Jesus could make such a character, is not this the Christ?"—W. F.

Ver. 12.—"*Long life.*" We may learn here—

I. THAT THE DESIRE FOR LONG LIFE IS NATURAL TO MAN. There may be times, when, under the pressure of trial and weariness, we are ready to say, with Job, "I would not live alway." But this is a temporary feeling. Our natural desire is to live, and to live long. This desire has been implanted by God, and works in many ways for good.

II. THAT LONG LIFE, WHEN SPENT IN THE SERVICE OF GOD, IS A GREAT BLESSING. We should desire life, not from fear of death, nor from the pain of parting with dear friends, but "to see good," and that we may do the more work for God. The present world, so far as we know, is the only one in which we can serve God by overcoming evil, and by patience under trial, and by converting sinners. Besides, the longer we live, the more good we can do to others, and the more we can glorify God. To glorify God by the service of our youth is good; to glorify him by the service of youth and manhood is better; but to glorify him by faithful service from first to last, through all stages of life, is best of all (Prov. xvi. 21; Phil. i. 23—26; 2 Tim. iv. 6—8). How different is it with the wicked! Prolonged life is to them a curse instead of a blessing. The more time, the more sin; the more sin, the more evil; till at last it might be said, "Would that he died early!" or, as of Judas, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24).

III. THAT LONG LIFE CAN BE BEST SECURED BY ATTENTION TO THE LAWS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. There is an intimate connection between the body and the soul. We may disregard the laws of health as to the body, and then we must suffer. The care of the body is as needful, in its place, as the care of the soul. The tendency of vice is undoubtedly to shorten life. How often does it happen, that young men, naturally possessed of good constitutions, bring on weakness and disease by dissolute living! On the other hand, the practice of self-denial and virtue is favourable to longevity. "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Prov. x. 2—7). The question of the psalmist meets a response in our hearts, "What man is he that desireth life?" and his wise and fatherly counsel should find an echo in our lives, "Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." The laws of health are largely studied in our days. We have Acts of Parliament on "Public

Health," and much is done to promote the physical comfort and health of the people. This is good. It is of much advantage that the people, down to the poorest, should have pure air and wholesome food and favourable surroundings, and it is the duty of the Church, as well as the state, to look to these things. But more is needed. There must be proper education of the people. They must be taught, not only the care of the body, but the care of the soul. The only complete education is that which embraces the whole man—body and soul and spirit. We are only perfectly educated when we are taught of God, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus ii. 13). Longevity was not only a promise of the Old Testament (Deut. iv. 40; Eccles. xii. 13), but it is a promise of the latter-day glory (Isa. lxxv. 20).—W. F.

Ver. 13.—Here are *three great things*. I. A GREAT GIFT. Speech is one of our highest endowments. It enables us to utter our thoughts and to converse one with another. Man's advancement in knowledge and virtue has mainly followed from his possessing this faculty. There have been many ingenious speculations as to how speech has been obtained, but it is enough for us to say that it is from God. When we see a dumb man, we may learn the worth from the want, and should bless God for his goodness in having given us this noble gift.

II. A GREAT PERIL. The best things may be turned to bad uses. So with the tongue. If rightly used, it is a great blessing; if wrongly used, it is a great curse. "Evil" and "guile" are the common ways in which speech is abused, much to the hurt of the speaker and of the hearers. There is thus not only great waste, but manifold and great evils. "Life and death are in the power of the tongue" (Prov. xviii. 21).

III. A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT. It is possible to "keep" the tongue. To do this we must go back from the tongue to the heart (Prov. iv. 23). When the heart is right, the tongue will be right also (Matt. xii. 33, 34). Such mastery can only be acquired by earnest effort and patience and loving contemplation of Christ. St. James says he who has attained to this rare power is a "perfect man" (Jas. iii. 5, 6).—W. F.

Ver. 16.—*God's face*. "The face" is the organ of expression. The thoughts, the feelings, the inward movements of the soul, show themselves by the face. Therefore "the face" stands for the man (Gen. xlviii. 11); and when God is spoken of after the manner of men, his face is put for himself (Exod. xxxiii. 14). The text is like the mystic pillar of the wilderness. It has two aspects. While God looks forth with love and favour towards his people, he shows himself as terrible to his enemies (Exod. xiv. 24). His face, wherever seen, is always against those who wilfully and wickedly persist in doing evil.

I. GOD'S FACE IN NATURE IS AGAINST THEM THAT DO EVIL. There is law in nature. To obey the law is to conquer, to disobey is to suffer. As to transgressors, there is neither exception nor immunity. We see the stern, unbending severity of law in the awful passage, Prov. i. 24—31.

II. GOD'S FACE IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES IS AGAINST THEM THAT DO EVIL. Take the ten commandments, and from the first to the last it is the same. The Law is holy and just and good. It demands obedience from all, and denounces condemnation and wrath against transgressors, without respect of persons. The recorded judgments of God may be held as expressing the same thing. All through, from Genesis to Malachi, whether as respects nations or individuals, God's face is against the evil-doer. In no part of Scripture is this brought out more vividly and forcibly than in the Psalms.

III. GOD'S FACE, IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON AND OUR SAVIOUR, IS AGAINST THEM THAT DO EVIL. Christ, in his doctrine, his precepts, his example, and in his redemptive work, is wholly and for ever against sin. His object is to "take away sin," and to bring them that do evil to do good and to be the loving and obedient children of God, that they may walk in the light of God's favour for ever.—W. F.

Vers. 1—10.—*Deliverance and gratitude*. Occasion of the psalm uncertain. Celebrates some great deliverance which awakens praise and inspires him to teach others trust and the secret of a prosperous life.

I. A GREAT DELIVERANCE CELEBRATED. (Vers. 4—6.) *Salvation.* 1. *He was in great trouble and danger.* (Vers. 4—6.) That the nature of the danger is not explained. *Sin and sorrow* our greatest trouble. 2. *He earnestly sought deliverance.* (Vers. 4—6.) No salvation except to earnest seekers. 3. *God answered him and saved him.* His face was bright with the light of God's face. God's angel was the instrument of his deliverance. Christ our Mediator and Deliverer.

II. HE IS FILLED WITH GRATITUDE. (Vers. 1—3.) 1. *His thankfulness was to be enduring.* 1. 'Not an evanescent thing, like the morning cloud and early dew, but lasting. 2. *He calls upon all the afflicted (humble) to join in the praise.* (Vers. 2, 3.) Because they may experience a like deliverance. God's salvation is for the whole world.

III. HE INVITES MEN TO PUT THE GOODNESS OF GOD TO THE TEST OF EXPERIENCE. (Vers. 8—10.) 1. *They will find how blessed are they who trust in God.* 2. *All their true and real wants shall be satisfied.* (Vers. 9, 10.)—S.

Ver. 9.—*The fear of God.* "O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him." *The fear of God* described the whole of practical religion. There are various kinds and degrees of fear caused by our relation to God, combined in various proportions with other sentiments. He is the great and powerful, and we are the weak; and we are naturally ignorant of his nature; and till we know whether he is a malignant or a benevolent being, we naturally dread him. The fear which dreads him is the first feeling which springs up. When we have passed out of and beyond the feeling of dread, we may still be overpowered by awe. We feel that God is greater than our highest, most perfect knowledge of his nature; his vastness overcomes and prostrates us. *Jacob; Job; David.* But the strangest cause of fear is the sense of transgression and the fear of punishment. We dread the judgment of God upon our lives and actions. He must know the realities that lie beneath all appearance—the good and the evil. We may well fear when we think of his knowledge of us. The revelations of God's impersonal nature alarm us. They are all love and no feeling. The hurricane and the tempest are pitiless. The revelations of his personal nature in man and in Christ are full of compassion. God in Christ is the *Physician*; but we cannot help fearing what he may have to do upon us for our healing, before we can be made whole. But we ought to believe and know that, like a good physician, he never inflicts any but necessary pain, and how much the infliction costs him in his sympathy with us. Our theology often teaches that there are reasons for servile fear; that our relation to God is that of a courtier to an Eastern despot; or that of a Jew debtor to a Jew creditor, who has no generosity, but exacts the uttermost farthing; or that of a criminal to a Judge who tries to compound with the law by getting an innocent person to suffer for his crimes instead of himself; or who thinks God, in his providential discipline, a cruel Being, who calls upon him to suffer the loss of his children, as he called upon Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, in order to test his faith. But faith casts out the terrors of fear, not inspires them, and does not need such cruel experiments for our discipline. Then there is the fear inspired by faith and love, but which has no torment. A man who has a great undertaking before him, calling for the skill and energy of his highest functions, naturally trembles lest he should fail; like a painter, who stands at his task, but his heart trembling with the great pulses of his conception. He is fearful in proportion as he sees the perfection of the thing he is trying to embody. Turner watching the storm—that he might know how to paint it. So there is a lofty and noble fear of aspiration lest we should not fulfil the Divine purpose of love in our lives. The fear felt towards a good mother, who would sacrifice her life for her child. "How awful goodness is!"—S.

Vers. 11—22.—*The secret and blessings of a happy life.* "In this second part the psalmist turns to believers, addresses them, and says that it is his design to teach them the art of leading a happy and quiet life, and of being secure against enemies."

I. THE SECRET OF A HAPPY AND PEACEFUL LIFE. 1. *The fear of God.* (Vers. 11, 15, 18.) Childlike fear—compatible with trust and love. 2. *The government of the tongue.* (Ver. 13.) What is said on this in the New Testament by Peter and James. 3. *Righteousness of life.* (Ver. 14.) In its departing from evil—the negative aspect;

and in doing good—the positive. 4. *Strenuously seeking after peace.* (Ver. 14.) Seek peace, and pursue it.” Take care not to cause disagreement, but to promote good will and harmony.

II. THE BLESSINGS THAT ATTEND AND FOLLOW SUCH A LIFE. 1. *Prayer of the righteous is heard.* (Vers. 15—18.) Contrast to the doom of evil-doers (ver. 16). 2. *Deliverance out of all dangers.* (Vers. 17—19.) Troubles, the dangers are called, and sufferings. 3. *The presence and communion of God with his people.* This implied or expressed in nearly all the verses. 4. *The protection of their life and person.* (Vers. 20, 22.) Contrast again to the fate of the wicked (ver. 21). The words of the twentieth verse fulfilled at the crucifixion of our Lord.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXXV.

A PSALM ascribed to David by the title, and with many characteristics of his early style—abrupt, impassioned, full of lively and graphic images, and full of transitions. The picture which the writer draws of his own circumstances and position (vers. 11—17, 19—21) accords well with what we know of David's life when he was a fugitive from Saul, and there is a special agreement between the first verse of the psalm and words historically ascribed to David at this period of his career (1 Sam. xxiv. 15). The psalm naturally divides itself into three portions, nearly of equal length (vers. 1—10; 11—18; and 19—28), in each of which may be traced the three elements of complaint, prayer, and promise of thanksgiving; the promise of thanksgiving being in each case reserved to the close. Prayer predominates in the first and third portions, complaint (vers. 11—16) in the second.

Ver. 1.—Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me (comp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 15, “The Lord therefore be Judge, and judge between me and thee; and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.” The word translated “plead” is a judicial term; but the context shows that it was in the battle-field, rather than in the law-courts, that David's cause was to be pleaded. The second hemistich is therefore added to explain and correct the first; it is fighting, not pleading, that is needed under the circumstances.

Ver. 2.—Take hold of shield and buckler. “The shield (*magén*) was a smaller hand-weapon; the buckler (*tsinnah*) covered the whole body” (Kay). The “shield and buckler” are put forward first, because it is primarily defence and protection that David needs. His adversaries are the aggressors;

he is on the defensive; Saul is hunting him upon the mountains. And stand up for mine help (comp. Ps. vii. 6). Standing is the natural posture of one who interposes to help another.

Ver. 3.—Draw out also the spear; rather, bring out also the spear, since spears were not, so far as is known, kept in sheaths, like swords (Exod. xv. 9), but only laid up in an armoury. And stop the way against them that persecute me. So Jarchi, Rosenmüller, Hitzig, Kay, Professor Alexander, Hengstenberg, and our Revisers; but a large number of critics regard *ṣāp*—the word translated “stop the way”—as really the name of a weapon, the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *σάπης*, which was probably the battle-axe. (So Vitringa, Michaëlis, Bishop Horsley, Cheyne, Mr. Aglen, and the ‘Speaker's Commentary.’) The passage will then read, “Bring out also the spear and the battle-axe against them that persecute me,” which is certainly a better parallel to “Take hold of shield and buckler,” than “Bring out the spear, and stop the way.” Say unto my soul, I am thy Salvation. Comfort my soul, i.e., with the assurance that thou art, and wilt ever be, my Salvation (comp. Pss. xxvii. 1; lxii. 2, 6; cxviii. 14, 21, etc.). Deliverance from the immediate danger is not all that is meant; but rather support and saving help in all dangers and in all troubles.

Ver. 4.—Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul. It appears from this that David's life is being sought, which only happened at two periods in his career: (1) when he was a fugitive from Saul (1 Sam. xix. 15—xxvi. 4); and (2) during the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 13—xviii. 8). The psalm therefore belongs to one or other of those periods, most probably to the former (see the introductory paragraph, and note the resemblance between this passage and 1 Sam. xx. 1; xxii. 23). Let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Imprecations closely resembling these occur frequently in the Davidical psalms (see ver. 26; Ps. xl.

14; lxx. 2; lxxi. 13), and amount to a sort of commonplace, to be used whenever the machinations of his enemies against him are the subject that occupies his thought.

Ver. 5.—Let them be as chaff before the wind (comp. Ps. i. 4; Isa. xvii. 13; xxix. 5; Hos. xiii. 3). Chaff is the type of whatever is light, vain, futile, and worthless; chaff driven before the wind represents the confused rout of a beaten army flying without any resistance before an enemy. And let the angel of the Lord chase them; rather, *smite them*. The angel of the Lord, who protects the righteous (Ps. xxxiv. 7), is called on to complete the discomfiture of the wicked ones, who are David's enemies.

Ver. 6.—Let their way be dark and slippery; literally, *darkness and slipperiness*; i.e. let them fly along dark and slippery paths, where they cannot see their way, and will be sure to stumble and fall. And let the angel of the Lord persecute them; rather, *pursue after them*.

Ver. 7.—For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit; literally, *the pit of their net*. This is explained by some to mean "the destruction of their net;" by others, "the pit that is covered by a net." But neither explanation is altogether satisfactory. Some therefore suppose an accidental transposition of a word. Which without cause they have digged for my soul. "Without cause" means "without provocation on my part."

Ver. 8.—Let destruction come upon him at unawares; i.e. let the evil happen to him that he designed against others. As he sought to catch others in traps of which they knew nothing (ver. 7), so let an unexpected destruction come upon him. And let his net that he hath hid catch himself (comp. Psa. ix. 15, 16; lvii. 6; cxli. 10). It is the perfection of poetic justice when "the engineer" is "hoist by his own petard." Into that very destruction let him fall; rather, *for destruction let him fall therein*; i.e. let him not only fall into his own trap, but let his fall prove his destruction. David's imprecations have always something about them from which the Christian shrinks; and this is particularly the case when he asks for his enemies' destruction.

Ver. 9.—And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord. A sudden transition from imprecatory prayer to thanksgiving, or rather, to the promise of it—"My soul shall be joyful;" i.e. it shall be so when my prayers have been granted. It shall rejoice in his salvation. "Salvation" here is, no doubt, especially, deliverance from the immediate danger, but, perhaps, even here, not only that (see the comment on ver. 3).

Ver. 10.—All my bones shall say, Lord,

who is like unto thee? The "bones" here represent, not the frame only, as in Ps. xxxiv. 20, but the entire nature. David promises that his whole nature shall bear witness to God's mercy and goodness, proclaiming that there is "none like unto him" in these respects, none other that can deliver from danger as he can and does. As Hengstenberg observes, "He seeks to make the Lord grant the desired help by promising that the help afforded would yield a rich harvest of praise and thanksgiving." Which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him? (comp. Ps. lxxxvi. 1, where David again calls himself "poor and needy;" i.e. in want of help and peace and comfort; not absolutely without means, or he would not offer any temptation to the spoiler.

Vers. 11—18.—The second part of the psalm begins with a long complaint. David sets forth the woes under which he is suffering. There are: 1. Calumny (ver. 11). 2. Ingratitude (vers. 12—14). 3. Malevolence (ver. 15). 4. Insult from the vile and base (ver. 16). He then passes to prayer: Will not God rescue him (ver. 17)? In conclusion, he for the second time promises praise and thanks (ver. 18).

Ver. 11.—False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not (comp. Ps. xxvii. 12); literally, *malicious, or unrighteous witnesses* (see Exod. xxiii. 1). It is not probable that witnesses in a court are intended. David's calumniators accused him privately to Saul of "seeking his hurt" (1 Sam. xxiv. 9), and so stirred Saul up against him (1 Sam. xxvi. 19). By what is here said, they appear to have accused him to his face, and to have endeavoured to extort from him a confession of guilt.

Ver. 12.—They rewarded me evil for good (comp. ver. 13). Among those who slandered him were persons with whose troubles he had sympathized, and for whom he had prayed with fasting when they were sick. His worst persecutor, Saul, admitted the charge here made. "Thou art more righteous than I," he said; "for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil" (1 Sam. xxiv. 17). To the spoiling of my soul; or, *the desolating of my soul*. The result of his enemies' machinations against him was to make him a fugitive and a wanderer, to separate him from the friend whom he tenderly loved, from his wife, his parents, and the greater part of his acquaintance.

Ver. 13.—But as for me, when they were



sick, my clothing was sackcloth. It is suggested that David had acted thus, especially in the case of Saul, when he was first afflicted with his terrible malady (1 Sam. xvi. 14—23; xviii. 10); but he appears to speak of his habitual practice, whenever any of his friends were sick. (On the putting on of sackcloth as a sign of grief, see Gen. xxxvii. 34; 2 Sam. iii. 31; xxi. 10; 1 Kings xxi. 27; 2 Kings vi. 30; xix. 1; Esth. iv. 1; Job xvi. 15; Psa. xiii. 11; lxix. 11, etc.) I humbled my soul with fasting. Another customary indication of grief (see Psa. lxix. 10; cix. 24; Judg. xx. 26; 1 Sam. xxxi. 13; 2 Sam. i. 12; xxii. 16; 1 Kings xxi. 27; Neh. i. 4, etc.). And my prayer returned into mine own bosom (comp. Matt. x. 13). Prayers for others, if prevented by their unworthiness from benefiting them, are yet not altogether void and vain. They bring a blessing to the man that offers them.

Ver. 14.—I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother. In every such case I sympathized with the sufferer to such an extent, that my conduct was like that of an intimate friend or a brother. I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. Nay, I went further; I took on all those outward signs of grief which are usual when a man has lost his mother. I "bowed down heavily," as though I could scarcely stand. The Orientals are extreme and exaggerated in their manifestations both of joy and grief (see Herod., viii. 99).

Ver. 15.—But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; rather, *in my fall, or in my halting*; "when I halted" (Revised Version). "The word implies a sudden slip and overthrow," such as is represented in 1 Sam. xviii. 8—29. Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me. Compare the case of Job (Job xxx. 1—14). It is a matter of common experience that when men fall from a high position into misfortune, the base vulgar crowd always turns against them with scoffs and jeers and every sort of contumely. And I knew it not; rather, *and I knew them not*; men, *i.e.*, of so low a condition, that I had no acquaintance with them (see the margin of the Revised Version). They did tear me, and ceased not (comp. Job xvi. 9).

Ver. 16.—With hypocritical mockers in feasts; literally, *profane jesters of cakes*; *i.e.* ribald parasites at a great man's table, whose coarse buffoonery entitles them to a share of the dainties; they made me their butt, their jest, and their hyword (cf. Job xxx. 9). They gnashed upon me with their teeth; *i.e.* spoke fiercely and angrily against me, like dogs that snarl and show

their teeth (comp. Job xvi. 9; Pa. xxxvii. 12).

Ver. 17.—Lord, how long wilt thou look on? "How long?" is the common cry of sufferers (Job xix. 2; Psa. vi. 3; xiii. 1; lxxix. 5; lxxxix. 46; Hab. i. 2; Rev. vi. 10), who do not recognize the wholesome discipline of suffering, or realize the fact implied in the phrase, "No cross, no crown." Man desires immediate deliverance; God mostly delays his deliverance until Patience has "had her perfect work" (Jas. i. 4). Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions (comp. Pa. xxii. 20).

Ver. 18.—I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people. The promise is repeated (see vers. 9, 10); but, as before, it is conditional on deliverance being granted, and intended to induce God to grant it, and to grant it speedily.

Vers. 19—28.—The main element of this, the third section of the psalm, is prayer. Complaint finds a voice in vers. 20, 21, and thanksgiving in ver. 28; but with these exceptions, the strophe is one long strain of prayer. The prayer is, first, negative: "Let not mine enemies rejoice" (ver. 19); "Keep not silence" (ver. 22); "Be not far from me" (ver. 22). But after this it becomes mainly positive: "Stir up thyself, and awake to judgment" (ver. 23); "Judge me, O Lord" (ver. 24); "Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion that rejoice at my hurt" (ver. 26); "Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause" (ver. 27); "Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in my prosperity" (ver. 27).

Ver. 19.—Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me (comp. Ps. xxxviii. 19, where David says that those who "hated him wrongfully" were "multiplied"). David feels that no one had any reason to hate him, since he had always sought the good of all with whom he came into contact (see ver. 12). Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause; *i.e.* let them not have cause to wink to each other in self-congratulation on their having triumphed over me completely.

Ver. 20.—For they speak not peace. Once more the language of complaint. David's enemies, though they have driven him from the court, and made him a fugitive and a wanderer, were not yet satisfied. They did not speak him peace. They continued to scheme against him. But they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet

in the land. David, if let alone, was willing enough to have remained "quiet in the land." He was a fugitive and an outlaw; but, could he have obtained a safe refuge—the cave of Adullam, or any other—would gladly have remained peacefully within it. But his enemies would not allow him to remain quiet. They stirred up the jealousy and hatred of Saul by false tales, and caused him to be "hunted upon the mountains" (1 Sam. xxvi. 20).

Ver. 21.—Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha! our eye hath seen it. They "opened their mouth wide" in scornful derision; and shouted triumphantly, "Ha, ha! our eye hath seen his downfall!"

Ver. 22.—This thou hast seen, O Lord. Nothing of this has been hid from thee; thine eye, O Lord, has seen it. Therefore I call upon thee. Keep not silence. Refrain not thyself. "Up, and let not man have the upper hand" (Ps. ix. 19). O Lord, be not far from me. Draw near, hasten, vindicate my name (comp. Ps. xxii. 19; xxxviii. 21; lxx. 12).

Ver. 23.—Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment (comp. Ps. lxxx. 2; xlv. 23; lxxviii. 65). The psalmists call on God to awake, not as though he were really asleep, but as a sort of stirring appeal to him to arise and manifest himself. Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. "Awake," i.e., "to judge my cause—to acquit me, and condemn my enemies" (comp. Ps. ix. 4; xxxv. 1; xliii. 1, etc.).

Ver. 24.—Judge me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness. Let thy law of righteousness be the rule by which I am judged, and my enemies also. Then the victory will remain with me; thou wilt not let them rejoice over me.

Ver. 25.—Let them not say in their hearts, Ah! so would we have it (comp. ver. 21);

literally, *ah! our soul*, i.e. "our heart's desire is accomplished; we have got our wish." Let them not say, We have swallowed him up; i.e. destroyed him, ruined him, brought him to an evil end (comp. 2 Sam. xvii. 16).

Ver. 26.—Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me (comp. ver. 4, of which this is an enlargement, with variations, the sentiment being exactly the same). Very similar maledictions will be found in Ps. xl. 14; lxx. 2; lxxi. 13; cix. 29.

Ver. 27.—Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause. When David's enemies are "ashamed and put to confusion" (ver. 26), his friends will naturally "shout for joy, and be glad." This they will do, partly, out of sympathy; partly because their own interests are bound up with those of their leader. Had Saul captured David when he "hunted him upon the mountains," the fate of David's followers would have been death or exile. Yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant; literally, *in the peace of his servant*. God desires that David's present troubles should cease, and that he should enjoy a time of rest and tranquillity. This was granted him, to some extent, at Ziklag (1 Sam. xxvii. 4–7), but more fully when he came into his kingdom (2 Sam. v. 1–16).

Ver. 28.—And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long (comp. vers. 9, 10, and 18). David means to promise perpetual gratitude and thankfulness. He will not merely return thanks publicly, once for all, in the great congregation (ver. 18), but will continue to praise God always.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 3.—*The assurance of salvation.* "Say unto my soul," etc. Can the heart frame, the lips utter, a more ambitious request? "Creator and Preserver of all being, Almighty, Eternal, Infinite God, speak to me, even me; tell me that thou art mine; that I am thine!" Yet this prayer is as reasonable as ambitious. For human nature has in it a capacity which can be satisfied with nothing less. What God says must needs be true. Therefore this is a double petition: (1) that God will be my Salvation; (2) that he will assure me of this.

I. GOD IS THE SOUL'S SALVATION. Salvation is often spoken of as God's *gift* (Ps. xxxvii. 39; Isa. xlv. 7; xlvii. 13). But here (as Ps. xxvii. 1; Isa. xii. 2) God himself is our Salvation. The word has two meanings—the experience of being saved; the power that saves. In the first sense, God bestows salvation—*q.d.* redemption from guilt and its reward; spiritual healing; deliverance from the habit and power of sin; in a word, life. In the second sense, it is the love which pities, the grace which pardons, the righteousness which atones; the spiritual power that quickens the dead soul; the light by which we see truth, the strength whereby we obey it; the Divine

breath whereby our spirit lives. All this is in God. Salvation is ours as bodily life is ours—God's work and gift. But "the Father hath life in himself." How worse than vain is the notion that we can save ourselves! Salvation is not a reward to be earned or result to be toiled for; it is life. You can starve or poison yourself, but you cannot bestow on food its power to nourish, or on your body to receive nourishment. You can maim yourself, but not restore a limb. You can *sin*, but not forgive, atone, redeem. These *are* God's alone. Salvation is personal: "*thy* salvation." It must be so, since sin is personal, character is personal, holiness and happiness are personal. There may be community in sin and guilt, or in noble effort and benevolent action; but each one bears his own responsibility. If *you* are saved, God must say to *your* soul, "I am *thy* Salvation."

II. WE NEED GOD'S OWN ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION. "Say," etc. It is too great a thing to take on man's work. Sin so deadens the conscience, that to many forgiveness seems an easy thing. But let conscience wake, and it becomes difficult to believe that God can forgive. How can this prayer be answered, this assurance given? It needs no voice from heaven (as to Abraham, who had no Bible, no gospel; Gen. xv. 1). The standing answer is in the gift of God's beloved Son, and in the promises of his Word (1 John v. 9—11; 1 Cor. i. 30). The special answer is by the gift of his Spirit, promised to every one who asks (Luke xi. 13; Rom. v. 5; viii. 16). The dependence of salvation on faith is not (as some fancy) a *condition*, rendering salvation less free. It is the very means by which it is freely given. "Look unto me, and be ye saved!" Believe and live! Ask and have! Therefore there is no presumption in that personal joyful assurance of salvation which rests *not on our own faith*, but simply on God's Word (John x. 28, 29; 2 Tim. i. 12).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—28.—*A hard case—a very hard one—laid before God.* This is one of those psalms in which the writers often meet with much scolding and with scant sympathy. It has been said that this psalm is not worthy of David. We are not prepared to say so: but we are prepared to contend that many of the criticisms passed on it are utterly unworthy of those who thus criticize.<sup>1</sup> If we will but study the *whole* psalm in all its bearings, while we may not feel called on to justify every expression therein, we shall feel bound to regard fairly those circumstances of extreme hardship by which such expressions were called forth. We may have the case before us, if we "open up" the contents of the psalm in the following threefold order.

I. THE CASE SHOULD BE ADEQUATELY STUDIED. Beyond all question, it is a hard one, almost more than flesh and blood could bear. We will look at it: 1. *As between David and his enemies.* A bare enumeration of its main features (of which there are seven) will suffice. He was waylaid without cause (ver. 7). False witnesses spake maliciously against him (ver. 11). They actually rewarded evil for good (ver. 12). In *their* trouble David had behaved himself as their friend or brother (vers. 13, 14). In *his* trouble the enemies manifested a malicious joy (vers. 15, 16).<sup>2</sup> Their malice was not against him only, but against others also (ver. 20). And not only so, but against the entire cause of righteousness of which David was the representative, their rage and hatred were directed (ver. 22). Now let us look at the case: 2. *As between David and his God.* How does he plead with Jehovah? He prays that God himself would interpose, and come into conflict with those who thus afflicted him (vers. 1, 2, 3, 17, 22, 23); that God would manifest himself as David's Deliverer (ver. 3); that the wicked might be thoroughly put to shame; that their way might be dark and slippery, etc. (vers. 4, 5, 6, 8, 26); that God would reveal his delivering grace (ver. 10); that

<sup>1</sup> See three thoughtful articles on "The Vindictive Psalms," in the *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ii. p. 325, by Mr. Hammond; and the *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vii. p. 131, by Mr. Bernard, and p. 357, by Mr. Aglen. Hengstenberg may be consulted hereon with special advantage.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 16: "With hypocritical mockers in feasts;" literally, "with profligate cake-jesters," or parasites; time-serving flatterers, who frequented the tables of the great, to gain a living by buffoonery (Dr. Green).

David and those who favoured his righteous cause might rejoice in God's salvation (ver. 9); that God would execute righteousness and judgment (ver. 24); that he would not permit the malicious joy of the enemy to continue (vers. 19, 25); that the righteous might yet shout for joy at the triumph of their cause (ver. 27); and that with their joy David himself might blend his own (ver. 28). Now, when we thus set the *whole* psalm before us, and note how grievous is the case which was thus laid before God, and how varied are the forms of petition in which that is done, we cannot but feel amazed at the harsh estimate of David in which some of his critics have indulged. If David was too harsh in speaking of the wicked, his critics are *à fortiori* far too harsh in their treatment of him. Let us therefore note—

II. THE CASE SHOULD BE FAIRLY ESTIMATED. Let us look at it: 1. *Negatively.* (1) The words of this psalm are not the words of God to man, but words of man to God: this is an all-important distinction to make in dealing with the Psalms.<sup>1</sup> (2) No man can, no man ever could, pray beyond the level of his own spiritual attainment. (3) Hence it is not necessary that we should attempt to justify every word in the pleading of an Old Testament saint, any more than we should attempt to do so in the prayers of God's people now. But it may be said, "David was a prophet." True, and when he professed to give out God's word to him, we accept such word implicitly. But that is not the case here. *He is not praying as a prophet*, but as a troubled saint. (4) This prayer, with the imprecations it contains, is by no means illustrative of the spirit of the Mosaic dispensation, but only of the degree to which a man who could pray like this, actually fell below the spirit of the dispensation under which he lived. Here we are compelled to differ sharply from Bishop Perowne and others who regard this psalm as indicative of the contrast between the morality of the Old Testament and New Testament dispensations. Though in the Scriptures, revelation is progressive, yet the morality enjoined in the Old Testament is precisely the same as that enjoined in the New. So our Lord teaches (Matt. xxii. 36—40; v. 17, 18). In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord tears off the wrappings with which "they of old time" had concealed the teachings of the Mosaic Law, and restores that Law to its pristine integrity and glory, on his own authority. But in the psalm before us we have not Old Testament morality as given by God, but Old Testament morality as far as attained by the writer. Many a modern representative of religion would sanction the cutting down of Zulus by the thousand in war. What should we say if any one declared that to be New Testament morality, when it was only that individual presenting his own view of it? So with this and other imprecatory psalms; they give us, *not* God's precept, but man's defective prayers. At the same time, while we do not justify these maledictions of David, we are bound in all fairness also to put the matter: 2. *Positively.* (1) Here is a case of extreme provocation. (2) David was a king. (3) As such, he was not a merely private individual, but the representative of God's cause. (4) Hence his petitions are not those of personal vindictiveness; they are the passionate cries of one who yearns for God's vindication of the right. For we see at once the reason why, and the limit within which, he prays for vengeance on his enemies. (5) Whoever, owing to an inadequate study of the psalm, cherishes sympathy with David's enemies rather than with him, is grievously unjust. But we can not only free the case from being any stumbling-block to faith, we may even turn it to good account. For—

III. THE CASE MAY BE HELPFULLY UTILIZED. We gather from it: 1. How great is the mercy that wronged saints can look up to God as the Avenger of their cause (Luke xviii. 1—8)! 2. There is a very great difference between a private feeling of vindictiveness, and the indignation felt at a great public wrong. It would be wicked of us to cherish the first; it would be wicked of us *not* to cherish the second. 3. Whatever the case of wrong we have to lay before God, we may tell it to him just as we feel it. He is a loving Friend to whom we may unburden everything *without any danger of being misunderstood*. 4. If in our putting of the case before God, we say anything wrong or wrongly, God will forgive what is wrong in our prayers, and will answer them in his own way, often doing "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." 5. Hence we may leave the method of vindicating the right and of shaming the wrong, entirely in the hands of God. Such expressions as those in

<sup>1</sup> See our first homily on the Psalms.

vers. 4, 5, 6, 8 would ill become us (cf. Rom. xii. 19, 20). 6. Nevertheless, it is perfectly true that severity to evil-doers is sometimes the greatest mercy to the Church of God (Acts v. 1—11). 7. God, even now, very often answers the agonizing prayers of saints by "terrible things in righteousness" (Ps. lxxv. 5; Rev. viii. 3—5). 8. If we do not so far sympathize *with the spirit* of this and other imprecatory psalms as to yearn to see righteousness triumphant and wickedness put to shame, we are fearfully guilty before God, and are sinking immeasurably below the morality and public spirit of those very psalms which are so unfairly criticised and so thoughtlessly condemned. To plead for the victory of righteousness and for the crushing and shaming of iniquity is a necessity of a good man's nature. He cannot help it. Yea, one petition in the Lord's Prayer involves the whole, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." And more than this, no one understands the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, who looks at it as providing only for the present forgiveness of individual souls: it is a grand and glorious plan for the inbringing of universal and everlasting righteousness; and when the Saviour's blood moistened earth's soil, it guaranteed that earth should be rescued from the destroyer, that the hosts of ill should be exposed and put to shame, and that Christ should wear the everlasting crown.—C.

VERS. 1—28.—*The flesh and the Spirit.* This psalm has been variously interpreted. Some say David speaks here representatively, not for himself, but for the community of Israel. Others say that he speaks prophetically, and with special reference to the days of Messiah. Others again hold that he speaks as a holy man, moved by the Holy Spirit to record the feelings that had passed through his own heart in time of trial. This last seems the more reasonable interpretation.

I. First it agrees best with **THE METHOD OF INSPIRATION**. The object of inspiration is truth. It is not necessary that what is perfect should alone be recorded, but it is that the record itself should be perfect. Besides, there is undoubtedly an advance in the New Testament from the Old, both as respects the spirit of the prophets, and the greatness of the truths revealed.

II. Further, this view agrees best with **THE ANALOGY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE**. In Job and Ecclesiastes and elsewhere there are different speakers, and they do not all speak the same thing. There is diversity of opinion, and high debate. We have to walk circumspectly. We have to discriminate, lest we should take the devil's lie or the counsel of fallible men for the eternal truth of God (Job ii. 4; xlii. 7). So of the Psalms. The record is true, but all that is recorded is not truth. There are various phases of thought and feeling, of character and life. Even the same speaker does not always keep the same level; at one time he may cry, "I was as a beast before thee," and almost with the same breath, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Ps. lxxiii. 22, 25).

III. Again, this view accords best with **THE FACTS OF DAVID'S LIFE**. He was not a perfect man; and who so ready to confess this as himself? Look at the historical parts of Scripture, and you find him saying and doing things far from righteousness. Why should he be judged differently when he speaks in poetry than when he speaks in prose? Is it not reasonable to take what he says, in the one case as in the other, as the honest expression of his heart, and to judge it by the same standard? No doubt the Psalms are to be regarded as spoken in moments of highest religious consecration; but if David is to be held as always speaking in the Psalms as a perfect man, it will be hard to bring the facts into harmony with the other facts of his life, and, moreover, the effect would be to remove the psalms from the sphere of ordinary experience, and to empty them of much of their sweetness and virtue. Delitzsch has said that "this whole psalm is as it were the lyrical amplification of that which David says when face to face with Saul in 1 Sam. xxiv. 16." Looking at it in this light, it seems the story of a soul's conflict—the struggle of the spirit against the flesh—painful and severe, with risings and fallings, till at last peace is attained. It begins with a passionate cry to God for justice, and the language, full of fire and impetuosity, is such as would naturally rise to the lips of a man of war. His imagination works in the line of his desires, and pictures an overthrow of his enemies, quick and terrible. Their destruction would be his "salvation," and for this he would rejoice and give God thanks

(vers. 9, 10). In the second part of the psalm he reverts to the cruel treatment he had received, but speaks of it with more calmness—more in sorrow than in anger. He remembers how he had tried to be patient, how he had restrained himself, and returned good for evil. But it had been in vain. Brooding upon this, his heart again rises in wrath (ver. 17). But as he comes nearer to God, and feels more intensely the sweetness of God's love, he recovers more quietness. Once more the surges of passion rise, and he is in danger of being overwhelmed; but again he turns to God, his only Refuge, and casting himself upon his care, and committing things wholly to his hand, he enters into the rest of faith and hope and love. The portrait may be said to be true to life. We have not only the good, but the bad; not only love to man, but the struggle to keep that love; not only faith in God, but the difficulty of gaining the height of that faith, and of holding it when it had been won. Thus we have a record which harmonizes with the experience of God's saints of all ages from Abraham to Paul, and that is rich in instruction and comfort. Who is there who tries to follow Christ, but knows how hard it is to be patient under injustice, to forgive our enemies, and to pray for them who spitefully use us and persecute us? It is some comfort for us, as with Christian when sorely tried in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, to hear the voice of a brother, and to be able to say, each one to his soul, "that some who feared God were in this valley as well as himself."—W. F.

Ver. 22.—*God's silence*. "There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Eccles. iii. 7). So it is with man, and with reverence it may be said, so it is with God. There is a sense in which God is never silent. In manifold ways his voice is ever sounding in our ears. But there are times when God may be said to be silent, even with regard to his own people. There is speech on the one side, but no answer on the other. This silence may be prolonged till it becomes distressingly painful. There is the sense of loss; there is the feeling of desertion; there is the dread of worse things to come—of the going down to the pit of darkness and despair (Ps. xxiii. 4). Luther said, in his strong way, "O my God, punish me rather with pestilence, with all the terrible sicknesses on earth, with war, with anything, rather than thou be silent to me!" But though this silence is to be deprecated, yet it is ordained of God for good. It may come as—

I. **JUST RETRIBUTION**. The wicked do not seek after God. It is no wonder, therefore, if God should deal with them after their own ways (Prov. i. 24—28; John xiii. 9). But even good men may become negligent—they may fall into sin and forget God. Therefore it may be necessary to let them see and learn the evil of departing from the living God (Pss. xciv. 10; cxxv. 5; Jer. ii. 19).

II. **MERCIFUL WARNING**. We must not judge of God by ourselves. We must not think that he is arbitrary or cold. If he is silent, it is for just cause. Remember how it was with Saul (1 Sam. xxviii. 6). Well would it have been for him, if he had regarded the doings of God, and turned to him in repentance. But he hardened his heart. God warns us also. His silence should bring our sins to our remembrance. "Your sins," saith the prophet, "have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. lix. 2; cf. Hos. v. 15).

III. **GRACIOUS DISCIPLINE**. The end of the Lord is merciful. If he is silent, it may be: 1. *To try our faith*. Remember the Syro-Phœnician woman (Matt. xv. 21—28). 2. *To quicken our sense of dependence*. God is Sovereign. He is under no obligation to us. If he hears, it is in mercy. We are too ready to think we have a claim upon him, and to resent his silence. We need to learn humility. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. v. 8). 3. *To enhance the value of the blessings we lack*. The worth is known by the want. Memory of past joys makes us the more eager in seeking renewed tokens of love and good will. The light is sweet to the eyes, but it is sweeter if for a while withdrawn. Friendship is dear, but absence makes the heart grow fonder. The love of God is the joy of the heart; but if clouds and darkness gather between us and God, the more earnestly do we cry for the restoration of his favour (Jer. xxix. 11—14). 4. *To prepare us for higher manifestations of God's love*. We need to be brought low in order to be raised up. We need to be emptied of pride and self-righteousness to be filled with the fulness of God. If we ask and receive not, it is because we ask amiss. This we have to learn. We are

led, therefore, to self-examination, to penitence, to confession. God has something better than we thought of in store for us. It may be something to do or to suffer for him. There is a "needs be" we should be made ready. Let us therefore trust, and not be afraid (Isa. liv. 7, 8).—W. F.

Vers. 1—10.—*Battle and victory.* The psalmist complains of unbelievers, ungodly enemies, prays for deliverance, giving promise of thanksgiving if his prayer is granted. The psalm falls into three divisions, in each of which the three elements of complaint, prayer, and thanksgiving are contained. The divisions are vers. 1—10; vers. 11—18; vers. 19—28. Take first division and its suggestions (vers. 1—10).

I. EVERY MAN HAS A SPIRITUAL BATTLE TO FIGHT. We have to contend against: 1. *Enemies that threaten the destruction of the soul.* (Ver. 4.) Our temptations, from within and from without, are our dangerous foes, who will conquer and destroy us if we do not conquer and destroy them. We know what unresisted sin leads to. 2. *They are crafty and insidious foes.* (Vers. 7, 8.) They use smiles and sophistries to conceal their real nature and designs. Evil men lay plots to ensnare the young and unwary. Hence the need of watchfulness and circumspection. 3. *They are cruel, unrelenting foes.* (Ver. 4.) They devise our hurt and follow us continually. There can be no compromise with them.

II. WE MUST SEEK THE HELP OF GOD TO GIVE US THE VICTORY IN THIS BATTLE. 1. *We must fight with Divine weapons.* The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and the helmet of salvation, etc. 2. *Under the Divine inspiration.* Filled with the trust, and love, and courage, and hope of those who catch their inspiration from Christ. Christ is the Captain of our salvation. The true soldier will follow the great General everywhere. 3. *God helping us, we are stronger than all our foes,* and are sure of victory at last.

III. WHEN THE BATTLE HAS BEEN FINALLY WON WE SHALL BE FILLED WITH GRATITUDE TO GOD. (Vers. 9, 10.) For all the grace and help we have received in every stage of the conflict. And for the *eternal value* of the victory we have gained. This cannot be fully known here.—S.

Vers. 11—18.—*The wicked and the good.* The general subject in this section of the psalm is a contrast between the wicked and the good, setting forth the *baseness* of the wicked nature, and the generous sympathies of the good.

I. THE BASENESS OF THE WICKED. Their general characteristics are: 1. *They often bring false malicious charges against good men.* (Ver. 11.) "They demand satisfaction at my hands for injuries of which I have never even heard." 2. *They return evil for good.* (Ver. 12.) They had been former friends: this was the sting of their ingratitude and injustice. Former favours sour the minds of the ungrateful, and intensify their hatred. 3. *They exult over the calamities of the good, and insult and injure them.* (Ver. 15.) "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," and cruelty always embrutes the bad mind. 4. *They incite the senseless rabble to persecute good men.* (Ver. 16.) The multitude ever ready without reason to join in a hue and cry, and, without thinking, are ready to become the instruments of bad men.

II. THE NOBILITY OF THE GOOD. 1. *Broken friendships fill them with a sense of bereavement.* (Ver. 12.) The good hunger for love, as well as give it; and, when denied it, are afflicted with a sense of loneliness. 2. *They are deeply sympathetic with the afflictions of others.* (Vers. 13, 14.) They fast and pray in token of the sincerity and depth of their sympathy. 3. *In the calamities and sorrows of life the good turn to God for help and deliverance.* (Ver. 17.) Especially the more they feel deserted by former friends. 4. *They are constrained to give thanks to God for his mercies.* (Ver. 18.) They are not ungrateful, like the wicked. Gratitude is a joy to the generous and religious mind.—S.

Vers. 19—28.—*Pleas for triumph.* The substance of this third division is a continuous prayer that God would give him to triumph over his enemies; and the plans on which the prayer is grounded.

I. HE PRAYS THAT THE CAUSE OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS MAY NOT TRIUMPH. 1. *The enmity of his enemies was without just cause.* (Ver. 19.) To be unjustly accused

wounds a good man very deeply. 2. *He was the champion of public order and peace; and therefore they opposed him.* (Ver. 20.) Employed deceitful words and schemes to disturb and overthrow the public peace. Bad men therefore. 3. *God himself was the witness of their injustice and wickedness.* (Ver. 21.) And cannot but interpose of his own righteous will. 4. *He appeals to God on the ground of his personal righteousness.* (Vers. 23, 24.) Not on the ground of his perfection; but he appeals to his upright aim and just purpose and general rectitude. The righteous God *must* therefore overthrow his enemies. God's righteousness, and his own could not *both* be defeated. Their just retribution was to be clothed with confusion and dishonour. The psalmist is so sure that his prayer will be answered and his enemies punished, that we have next—

II. A GRATEFUL ANTICIPATION OF THE VICTORY. 1. *He calls upon all who love righteousness to magnify the work of God.* (Ver. 27, "who have pleasure in my justification, or righteousness.") The victory of the psalmist over his wicked enemies. 2. *He himself will sing of the righteousness of God for ever.* (Ver. 28, "all the day long.") We should praise God for ever as the Author of all our moral and spiritual victories. "Not unto us, but unto thy Name, O Lord," etc.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXXVI.

THIS short psalm is mainly didactic. It places in contrast the extreme wickedness of the wicked and the inexhaustible fulness of love, faithfulness, and righteousness which characterizes the God whom the wicked dare to offend. It ends with a brief but earnest intercessory prayer, that God will favour the righteous and protect them from the assaults of the ungodly, followed by an expression of confidence that the prayer will be granted.

The psalm divides itself into three strophes, corresponding to the division of the subject-matter. Strophe i. (vers. 1—4) gives the portrait of the wicked man. Strophe ii. (vers. 5—9) paints the Divine goodness. Strophe iii. (vers. 10—12) contains the prayer and the expression of confidence.

The title ascribes the psalm to David; and the critics generally acquiesce. Some of them point out special Davidical indications; but no one has ventured to assign it to any particular occasion in David's life. The epithet given to David in the title, "servant of Jehovah," would seem, however, to connect it with Ps. xviii.

Ver. 1.—The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart. This is a difficult passage. In the first place, the text is uncertain, since some manuscripts have לִבִּי, "his heart," in the place of לִבִּי, "my heart." And further, whichever reading we prefer,

the meaning is far from clear. Dr. Kay translates, "Transgression's oracle to the wicked is, 'In the interior of my own heart,'" and understands the meaning to be that the sinfulness of the wicked man deludes him into the belief that his wickedness is known to no one but himself—it is all safely locked up in the recesses of his own heart. Professor Alexander suggests as possible, "Thus saith depravity to the wicked man, 'In the midst of my heart, there is no fear of God before his (i.e. God's) eyes.'" Others, preferring לִבִּי לִבִּי, render, "Transgression speaks to the wicked within his heart; There is no fear of God," etc.; regarding the two clauses as perfectly independent the one of the other. This is, perhaps, the best explanation. There is no fear of God before his eyes. Either he belongs to the class of "fools, who say in their heart, There is no God" (Ps. xiv. 1), or he agrees with those who cry, "Tush, God hath forgotten: he hideth away his face; he will never see it" (Ps. x. 11).

Ver. 2.—For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. Another very obscure verse, explained in various ways. The rendering of Professor Alexander is to be preferred, "For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, as to God's finding his sin and hating it;" i.e. he flatters himself that he will conceal his sin from God, so that God will not discover it to hate it (see also the comment of Dr. Kay, and the Revised Version).

Ver. 3.—The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit (comp. Ps. xii. 2; xxviii. 3). He hath left off to be wise, and to do good. There was a time when he occasionally acted wisely, and did what was right. But that time is gone by. Now he is consistently wicked.



Ver. 4.—He deviseth mischief upon his bed; rather, *he deviseth iniquity*—the same word as in the preceding verse. In the night, when he should be looked in innocent slumber, he lies awake, devising wicked schemes against others (comp. Prov. iv. 16; Micah ii. 1). He setteth himself in a way that is not good. More correct than the Prayer-book Version, “He hath set himself in no good way.” The wicked man is not merely negatively bad; he determinately chooses a path of life that is evil. He abhorreth not evil. He has no aversion to it, no horror of it, no shrinking from it. Whether a thing is right or wrong is to him a matter of complete indifference. So callous is he, so hardened.

Ver. 5.—Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens. Instead of the usual contrast between the wicked man and the godly one (Psa. i. 1—6; iv. 2, 3; v. 10, 11, etc.), the psalmist here makes the startling contrast between the wicked man and God! The character of the wicked man is given in four verses (vers. 1—4), the portrait of God in five (vers. 5—9). God’s first and principal characteristic is “mercy” — or rather, “loving-kindness” (רחם). This quality is revealed, not on earth only, but also in heaven, towards the angels. Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Next to loving-kindness in God comes “faithfulness” — fidelity to every promise that he has ever made, unswerving attachment to those whom he has once loved, undeviating maintenance of the truth (comp. Psa. lvii. 10; cviii. 4).

Ver. 6.—Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; literally, *like the mountains of God*; and so Luther, Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, Kay, Cheyne, and the Revised Version. According to the Hebrew idiom, this means “the very greatest mountains” — those which seem to stand the strongest and the firmest. “Righteousness,” or “justice,” is placed immediately after “faithfulness,” because of its close connection with it. Thy judgments are a great deep; *i.e.* such as man cannot fathom — unsearchable — past finding out. O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. The providential care of God for his creatures is another of his leading characteristics, and one especially deserving man’s attention and gratitude. It is a form of his loving-kindness.

Ver. 7.—How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! The psalmist, having made mention of the “loving-kindness of God” as his most characteristic quality (ver. 5), and again brought it into notice as causing him to provide so carefully for all his creatures (ver. 6), cannot refrain from glorifying the quality whereto he has called attention. “How excellent” — or, *how pre-*

*ciuous* (Kay, Alexander, Cheynes, Revised Version) — “is thy loving-kindness!” How does it exceed all that we could have anticipated! How far does it go beyond all that we deserve! Therefore the children of men put their trust (or, *shall put their trust, or shall take refuge*) under the shadow of thy wings (comp. Psa. xvii. 8; lvii. 1; lxiii. 7, etc.). Encouraged by the consideration of thy goodness, the *beney Adam*, the children of weak, frail, sinful man, shall take heart, and lay aside their natural timidity, and turn to thee, and put their trust in thee, gathering themselves under the shadow of thy protecting wings, and looking to thee, and thee only, for safety and defence (see Ruth ii. 12).

Ver. 8.—They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house. God will satisfy all who trust in him with “blessings out of his holy seat,” and will satisfy them abundantly. The blessings intended are spiritual blessings; and the “house” is, primarily, “the place where God set his Name,” which at this time was the tabernacle. Faithful Israelites were to expect spiritual blessings through faithful attendance on the tabernacle worship, so far as it was accessible to them. The “house” typified heaven, whence, of course, the blessings really came. And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures; literally, *the river of thy Edens*. Thou shalt give them access to an exhaustless fountain of delight, a stream like that which watered Eden (comp. Isa. li. 3; lv. 1; John iv. 14; vii. 37, 38).

Ver. 9.—For with thee is the fountain of life. The ultimate source of all life is God. Israel had been taught by Moses (Deut. xxx. 20) that God was *their* Life; but this was not all; he is equally the Origin of life to everything that lives—to angels, men, beasts, birds, fishes, zoophytes, plants (see Gen. i. 11, 20, 24, 27, etc.). And, as he is the sole Source of natural life, so is he also the one and only Origin of spiritual vitality (Psa. xxx. 5; lxvi. 9; John i. 4; vi. 57; vii. 37—39, etc.). And in thy light shall we see light (comp. John i. 4, 5, 9; 1 John i. 5—7). God is essentially Life and Light. He “has life in himself” (John v. 26). He “is Light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John i. 5). The Son, who is “the Light of the world” (John viii. 12), is but “the Effulgence of his Father’s glory” (Heb. i. 3, Revised Version), “Light of light,” the ray which streams from the Sun of the universe. Yet from him comes the light which enlighteneth all creatures (John i. 9). “In his light we see light.”

Ver. 10.—O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee. Here begins the third strophe. Having finished his “instruc-

tion," the psalmist passes on to prayer; and is content to ask that God will be in the future such as he has been in the past—that he will "lengthen out," prolong, or "continue his loving-kindness" to his faithful servants, dealing with them as he has hitherto dealt with them (vers. 5, 7), mercifully, graciously, and lovingly. His faithful servants are "those that know him," because, as Hengstenberg observes, "the true and essential knowledge of God is to be found only in a sanctified mind." And thy righteousness to the upright in heart. Continue, *i.e.*, to deal justly with those whose heart is right with thee—who, in spite of occasional lapses, are really *in heart* sincere.

Ver. 11.—Let not the foot of pride come against me. The mention of "the foot of pride" is noted as a mark of Davidical authorship. "Every psalm of David which speaks of danger points to the pride of his

enemies as the source" (Canon Cook). And let not the hand of the wicked remove me; or, *drive me away* (Revised Version), *i.e.* force me into exile, as Absalom's party succeeded for a time in doing (2 Sam. xv. 13—30).

Ver. 12.—There are the workers of iniquity fallen; or, *yonder* (Kay). It is as if the psalmist suddenly saw a vision. "There"—on a spot that presents itself to his eyes—are the wicked actually "fallen;" they lie prostrate in the dust. They are cast down, and shall not be able to rise; or, *to rise up again* (comp. Ps. xviii. 38). Whereas the righteous may fall into misfortune repeatedly, and recover themselves (Prov. xxiv. 16), the workers of iniquity, when their time comes to fall, usually perish. At any rate, this would be the result of the overthrow which the psalmist sees in a sort of vision.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 4.—*The portrait of the godless man.* "He abhorreth not evil." This dark trait is the crowning stroke in the portrait here drawn of the godless man. If a man does not hate evil, it is certain he loves not good. Those twin precepts are like stems from one root (Rom. xii. 9, "Abhor . . . cleave"). What a man loves and follows shows what he *will* be; but what he hates shows what he *is*.

I. HATRED OF SIN IS A MORE SEARCHING MORAL TEST THAN ADMIRATION OF GOODNESS. True, *any* real love for goodness, desire after righteousness and holiness, shows a man not yet hopelessly bad. But there is a weak approval of good, with no earnest effort to follow it, which only amounts to self-condemnation. To *recognize* the right, true, good, kind, honourable path, and yet not *choose* it, is even a distinct step downward. Power to say "No" is the decisive test of strength of moral character. Good, if followed at all, must be pursued actively—uphill. But to go wrong you need but *yield*, and drift with the stream. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence" (Matt. xi. 12).

II. Hence HATRED OF SIN IS AN ESSENTIAL AND GLORIOUS FEATURE OF GOD'S CHARACTER. (Hab. i. 13; Jer. xlv. 4; Prov. vi. 16.) If men had power to stop the mischief and suffering caused by sin, they would think lightly of sin itself. It is because God does *not* think lightly of sin that he does not interfere to prevent the misery. If the stream is to flow clean, the fountain must be cleansed. God will not make an evil tree bear good fruit. Suffering is the divinely ordained penalty, warning men off from sin, tracking men out in their sins, calling men to repent of sin, witnessing to God's hatred of sin (Rom. vi. 23). But this is only one side. Misery, suffering, death, are no *arbitrary* infliction; no artificially contrived punishment. They are sin's *natural* result. Want of love to God and to man, ripening into "enmity against God" (Rom. viii. 7); and that self-indulgence and self-worship which practically are enmity to men, cannot but bear the bitter fruit of misery and death (Rom. vi. 21; Gal. v. 19—21). A world of perfect joy and lasting happiness must be a world from which sin is eternally shut out (Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 16).

III. This note of warning is one SPECIALLY NEEDED BY THE TIMES WE LIVE IN. Modern society is strong (stronger than at any past epoch) in benevolence, kindness; pity for the suffering, the fallen, even the guilty. It is weak on the sterner side—indignation against wrong, contempt of falsehood, stern zeal for justice, hatred of evil. We may see this in social life, in commercial life, in political life, in Church life, in theology. We like to "make things pleasant." We persuade ourselves that sin is no such very great evil; that God will not be very hard on it. We forget that the

most tremendous denunciations of sin and of sinners are from the loving lips of our Saviour himself. "Ye that love the *Lord*, *hate evil!*" (Ps. xcvi. 10).

Ver. 9.—"*The fountain of life.*" This short but sublime psalm opens in a minor key. With a few powerful strokes the psalmist paints the blindness, untruthfulness, blasphemous presumption of an ungodly life—a life void of godly fear, and of that hatred of evil without which there is no true love of goodness. Then as with a sudden recoil from this hateful spectacle, the psalmist turns to God, pouring forth a noble strain of praise. He contemplates God's mercy, truth, justice, bountiful providence, and loving-kindness to his children (ver. 9). May be looked at as the crowning point of this hymn of worship, at which praise turns to prayer.

I. GOD IS THE SOLE ORIGINAL POSSESSOR OF LIFE—UNDERIVED, SELF-SUSTAINED, ETERNAL. "The Father hath life in himself" (John v. 26). "God draws existence from his own store. We possess but a borrowed existence; being is not native to us. As in our turn, one by one, we shall pass out of this life, and the world will go on its way without us; so, if God willed, we might pass out of being, and the universe would not miss us" (Saurin). But God "inhabith eternity" (Isa. lvii. 15). This truth, the foundation of religion, is sublimely set forth in the Old Testament, especially in contrast with the vanity of idols; and is shadowed forth in the *personal* name by which God entered into covenant with his people (Exod. iii. 14; vi. 3; comp. Isa. xliii. 10—13; xlv. 6; so in the New Testament, John xvii. 3; Rev. iv. 9, 10).

II. GOD IS THE AUTHOR AND SUSTAINER OF LIFE. The variety, beauty, activity, fruitfulness, joy, of the life of all living creatures are so many streams, whose inexhaustible fountain is in him (Acts xvii. 25, 28). From the gigantic trees of California and Australia, four hundred or five hundred feet in height, to the all but invisible moss on Arctic snows; from the eagle, soaring above the mountain peaks, the elephant in his massive strength, the whale plunging deep in ocean, to those creatures revealed by our strongest lenses, tens of thousands of which find ample space in a few drops of water;—all draw life and being every moment from him. The least is as carefully desiged and finished as the highest. Let us not forget how these two worlds of life—plants and animals—are balanced and made mutually dependent: the plant feeding on the air which the animal breathes out, and which to itself is poison, and giving back that which the plant needs not, but which to the animal is the breath of life. Even death and decay are made to minister to life. The creatures appear and vanish, like waves on the great river of life; but the river flows on, for its fountain is in God (Ps. civ. 27—31). Shall we imagine that this is true only of our small world, and that all the suns and systems with which space teems are splendid deserts? Or is not Isa. xlv. 18 true of many and many another world as of our own?

III. SPIRITUAL LIFE—MAN'S HIGHEST LIFE—LIKE BODILY LIFE, HAS ITS FOUNTAIN IN GOD. He alone bestows and sustains it. We share with the lower creatures the life of sensation and conscious activity. But we have also (whether we heed it or not) a higher life, or capacity of life—the life of *personal character*, which may be cultivated and perfected in *personal communion with God*. Each one has in him germs of good and of happiness; germs, too, of evil and misery, for whose full development this life does not afford room. Each human spirit, a world in itself, has in it material for heaven or hell. This is so, whether we like to think so or no. More than this, Scripture reveals (what we could never have discovered, reasonable as it is) that the Spirit of God, personally bestowed and dwelling in us, creates and sustains this higher life (John iii. 6). The most vigorous life—bright intellect, intense emotion, strenuous will, fruitful activity—if destitute of living communion with God, and devoid of his Spirit, is pronounced in Scripture but a living death (Eph. ii. 1, 4, 5; 1 John v. 12).

LESSONS. 1. *Worship*. If we could rise to the height of these words, fathom their depth, read their full meaning, our souls would be bowed, yet uplifted in adoration—filled with the glorious sense of the majesty, the mystery, the infinite greatness and goodness of God (1 Tim. i. 17; vi. 15, 16). 2. *Submission*. He with whom is the fountain of life must determine how and how long the stream shall flow. Our lives belong to him. When he withdraws life he is not taking away what we have any right or claim to—only what is his (Heb. ix. 27). But the Lord Jesus holds the key (Rev. i. 18). 3. *Faith in Jesus*. Christ is the Possessor and Dispenser of spiritual

life (John v. 26). All the streams of both physical and spiritual life flow through him (Col. i. 15, 16; John i. 3). He came to give life (John x. 10). But a man might die of thirst at the brink of a full-flowing fountain, if he would not drink. So, with infinite pathos, our Saviour says, "Ye will not come" (John v. 40). But all who will are freely bidden (John vii. 37—39; Rev. xxii. 17).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*God's revelation of man to himself; or, the transgressor's heart turned inside out.* It has been thought by some that this psalm was written about the time when Saul gave his daughter Michal to David with a treacherous design (see Walford, *in loc.*); by others, that it is a general description of some of the wicked men—such as Saul, Absalom, Abiathophel, etc.—with whom David was brought into contact (see Fausset hereon). But there is no clue in the psalm itself to any such specific historical reference. We see a special significance in the title of the psalm, which tells us that it was written by David as a servant of Jehovah, and handed by him to the choirmaster for use in the songs of the sanctuary. We may regard it as a description of the heart of the ungodly, written in the piercing light of Divine revelation (see ver. 9), affording us a striking illustration of Heb. iv. 12, showing us that "the Word of God is" indeed "living and strong, sharper than any two-bladed sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow," being "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." We find, too, that the Apostle Paul regards the words, "There is no fear of God before his eyes," as a part of the Divine indictment against a sinful race, whether of Jew or of Gentile origin (cf. Rom. iii. 18). Hence the inspection of the human heart, the results of which are here stated, is one that has been carried on under the searching light of Heaven. And a terribly painful discovery it is, to find how much iniquity God sees hidden in the nooks and corners of the heart. For us to be always carrying on this introspection would be more than we could bear. Yet the wicked may well be asked to study their own hearts in the light of this description, that they may see how much they need deliverance from their dark and sinful selves; while the believer may well look into this description again and again, that he may see from how much he has been delivered by the grace of God.

I. LET US STUDY THIS SEARCHING INVESTIGATION OF THE SECRETS OF A HUMAN HEART.<sup>1</sup> (Ver. 1.) 1. *The heart of an ungodly man has an oracle of its own.* The Hebrew word translated "saith" is a noun, and means "oracle." Some would regard the phrase as elliptical, and as meaning, "The oracle [of God, concerning] the transgression of the wicked in his heart, is," etc. (so Cheyne and Olshausen). But it seems to us rather a satirical contrast. The righteous have their oracle, which is Divine. The wicked have *their* oracle, even transgression. The dislike of being governed by another is the governing principle of their lives. "Our tongues are our own: who is lord over us?" (Pss. xii. 14; ii. 3). Hence their "oracle" is dictated, not by loyalty, but by rebellion against God. 2. *There are terrible negations in the godless man's life.* (Ver. 1, "There is no fear of God before his eyes.") There is no desire of the Divine approval, nor dread of the Divine displeasure. It was reserved for the nineteenth century, however, to develop the most impious forms of this denial of God. There are not wanting novels, such as George Eliot's and others, which present model characters in social life on the basis of non-theism, and which depict it as a virtue to be without any fear of God whatsoever. This psalm deals with an evil which is by no means a thing of the past. It is developed to-day in frightful form, and puts on a guise of virtue to hide its ghastliness. There is a second negation (ver. 4): "He hath left off to be wise and to do good." The absence of the fear of God will soon be followed by the loss of respect for man, and the deterioration of general intelligence and of social virtue. There is no sustaining impulse for the highest excellence when God ceases to be enthroned in the heart. For a third negation here specified shows clearly enough

<sup>1</sup> According to the LXX., Syriac, and Arabic Versions, and Jerome, לִבִּי should be לִבְךָ i.e. "his heart," not "my heart."

the drift of the godless man (ver. 5): "He abhorreth not evil." The issue of a materialistic denial of God, and of a materialistic view of man, *must* be the denial of evil as evil. Evil cannot exist if atoms of matter be all. For molecules never break the ranks, and can never get out of harness. And he who first abhors not evil, out of senseless bravado, will come to deny evil altogether, and will let his passions hurry him whither they will, on the inward plea that he is "acting according to nature." 3. *There are equally terrible positive evils in the godless man's life.* First, evils in thought (ver. 3). The psalmist means either that, in spite of his godlessness, he has a very good opinion of himself, or else that he flatters himself his sins will never come out to light, and be found out in all their naked ugliness. Nor is this all. But he positively deviseth mischief upon his bed (ver. 5). Even in the night he is pursuing schemes of self-gratification, altogether regardless of righteousness or of the good of others. A second form of positive ill is found in his words (ver. 4). Truthlessness will soon follow godlessness. And when in his eye God ceases to be, it will not be long ere right ceases to be right, and truth to be truth. And a third form of ill will develop itself. "He setteth himself in a way that is not good." He plants his feet, he takes a determined stand, in the direction of gratifying self rather than in the direction of pleasing God. And will aim at nothing but "utility," in the narrow sense of hedonism. Right as right will have disappeared from the gaze of his eye, and will cease to govern either deed, word, or thought. How terrible a picture is this of unchecked human depravity!

II. WHAT PRACTICAL USE SHOULD BE MADE IN OUR DAY OF SUCH A TERRIBLE EXPOSURE OF THE SECRETS OF DEPRAVED HEARTS? 1. *It is a very solemn thought that we are thus being inspected, at every moment, by an all-searching gaze.* It is only where Divine revelation has been vouchsafed that sin is dealt with so very seriously, and that the heart is thus depicted so minutely. 2. *How fearful the descent of sin, and how encroaching are its inroads on character!* Yet, after all, we need not fall into the error of supposing that the Word of God regards all as *equally* guilty or as *equally* corrupt. Yet, as the Apostle Paul shows in the second and third chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, where he is handling the indictment which stands in God's Law against us, we are "all under sin." If the Jew has sinned against a written Law, the Gentile has sinned against an unwritten law. Hence both are "guilty before God;" although the measure of each one's guilt, and the depth of each one's corruption, can be judged accurately by God alone. 3. *Let us be devoutly thankful that we may know the worst of ourselves* by comparing what we are with the pure and holy Law of God. To know the disease is an important step in seeking for a cure. 4. *Even if we have not gone such lengths in guilt and maddened sin as are here described,* let us thankfully acknowledge that we owe it to the restraining providence of God. For, alas! the *germs* of all ill are in each of us. 5. *We need a deliverance from ourselves.* We need forgiveness for guilt, and cleansing from corruption. 6. *Since all are under sin, how righteous is the requirement of the gospel!* "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." No man is as good as he ought to be, nor yet as good as he knows he ought to be. And for this he ought to be sorry and to mourn his guilt persistently before God. When he is thus ready to put sin away by repenting of it, God is ready to put it away by forgiving it. 7. *It is the glory of the gospel that it takes into account all our needs,* from every possible point of view. In Christ we have pardon for the penitent's sin, and cleansing from the foulest corruption. Yea, through the Spirit of God we may be regenerated, and sanctified, and snatched from the power of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. 8. *It is only in that very Word which looks at sin most seriously, that man is regarded most hopefully.* Man and his sins are not inseparable. They may be parted. And when this blessed effect is brought about, "being made free from sin, and become servants unto God," they will "have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."—C.

Vers. 5—12.—*God's revelation of himself to man.* The reason for so sudden a transition in the theme of this psalm does not clearly appear. It is, indeed, possible that portions of two may be pieced together; but we have no proof of that. The remark of Calvin is very striking, "After having spoken of the great depravity of men, the prophet, afraid lest he should be infected by it, or be carried away by the

example of the wicked, as by a flood, quits the subject, and recovers himself by reflecting on a different theme.”<sup>1</sup> Whether this be precisely the correct account of the matter or no, certain it is that too prolonged a gaze into the desperate wickedness of man would unnerve us and would generate a spirit of misanthropic distrust. For our own balance of mind, and peace and rest, we *must* turn our gaze away from the haunts of sin to the abode of perfect righteousness and halcyon calm. And, thank God, we can do it. And if we turn the glass of the Word upward instead of downward, we shall find more to inspire with rapture than we have seen to create dismay. But neither the one description nor the other can be accounted for by the ordinary laws of the human mind. The psychology of the natural man will not serve us here. Only a “man whose eyes are open” could have written either the first or the second part of this psalm. And we here see the working, not of psychology, but of pneumatology—of the pneumatology of the spiritual man when receiving and transmitting a revelation from God and of him. What the Apostle Peter says of prophecy generally may be applied to this psalm: it “came not of old time by the will of man.” David spake as he was “moved by the Holy Ghost.” Having, then, spied into the abyss of depravity by the glass of the Word, let us peer into the boundless heights of glory by looking through the same glass when turned upward. Let us study—

I. THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD IN THEIR SUBLIME AND PEERLESS GLORY. (Ver. 5, *et seq.*) We have put before us the sphere in which the Divine Being dwells—“in the heavens;” “unto the clouds.” The heavens, in the highest sense, are regarded as the dwelling-place of God; and, to the same intent, the word translated “clouds.”<sup>2</sup> Since God is everywhere present, we must not confine his presence (in our thinking thereof) to one spot rather than another (Ps. cxxxix. 7—12). Yet we are permitted to think of “heaven” as being a region where he specially manifests his glory—“Our Father, which art in heaven;” “The Son of man” “came down from heaven” (cf. Ezek. i. 26—28; Isa. vi. 1—4; John xvii. 5). High, high above this troublous scene of unrest and *ein* there is a throne of glory, there is a seat of power, there is a realm of unruffled, everlasting calm (Ps. xcvi. 1). But here we have revealed to us him who is on the throne, and the glorious attributes which mark his infinite Being. 1. “*Mercy*,” “goodness;” *benignitas, misericordia*. God has a heart. “He that formed the ear, doth he not hear? He that formed the eye, doth he not see? He that formed the heart, doth he not feel?” Yea, verily. God is a Being of infinite tenderness, compassion, and love. 2. “*Truth*;” i.e. “faithfulness;” *fides, veritas*. “Hath he said, and shall he not do it?” “Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”

“Firm as a rock his truth remains  
To guard his promises.”

Not one thing hath failed or shall fail of all that the Lord hath spoken. 3. “*Righteousness*.” (Ver. 6.) “Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.”<sup>3</sup> *Justitia*. It is because the righteousness of God is so firm and unmovable that we can repose in him the most entire and absolute confidence. Even love, divorced from righteousness, would fail to win our hearts. The work of Christ commands our homage, love, and rest, because therein love and righteousness are seen in sublimest concord. Note: How intense the relief to turn our eyes away from this scene of sin and corruption to him “whose dominion extendeth over all” in righteousness, mercy, and truth!

II. THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD IN THEIR BEARING UPON US. 1. *Perfect administration*. (Ver. 6.) “Thy judgments are a great deep;”<sup>4</sup> a profound abyss (cf. Ps. lxxvii. 19). They often present a depth of mystery which we have no plummet to sound. But they are *judgments* for all that; i.e. right-settings—they are never at fault. And never is there any flaw in the Divine administration on this globe (Ps. xcvi. 2). 2. *Loving-*

<sup>1</sup> See Calvin’s ‘Commentary,’ *in loco*.

<sup>2</sup> The word occurs in the following passages: Deut. xxxiii. 26; 2 Sam. xxii. 12; Job xxxv. 5; xxxvi. 28; xxxvii. 18, 21; xxxviii. 37; Ps. xviii. 11; lvii. 10; lxxviii. 34; lxxvii. 17; lxxviii. 23; lxxxix. 6, 37; cviii. 4; Prov. iii. 20; viii. 28; Isa. xl. 15; xlv. 8; Jer. li. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, “mountains of God;” cf. the following expressions (Psa. civ. 16; lxx. 9).

<sup>4</sup> Not, as Hengstenberg, “a great flood.” The word signifies “abyss” (see Job xxviii. 14; Ps. xlii. 8; Amos vii. 4; Gen. vii. 11).

*kindness.* The same word as is rendered "mercy" (Authorized Version) in ver. 5. But the translators saw the meaning of "mercy" *per se* becoming "loving-kindness" towards us. Not only has the sun light, but we feel the warmth of his rays. Even so the tender mercy of God discloses itself to us in innumerable acts of kindness and love. 3. *Protection.* (Ver. 7.) "The shadow of thy wings" (cf. Exod. xix. 4; Deut. xxxii. 9—12; Ruth ii. 12; Pss. xvii. 8; xci. 4; lvii. 4; lxiii. 7; lxi. 4). Perhaps the most wonderful of God's attributes is that patience with men, whereby he restrains the power that could crush, and puts it forth so gently as to guard. Had we not been sheltered by an invisible guardianship, we had been crushed ere now a thousand times over. Note, also, that the figure of "wings," etc., indicates a marvellous tenderness of love. 4. *Supply.* (Ver. 8.) "The fatness of thine house"—the rich provisions of Divine love which are so largely enjoyed in the fellowship of worship in the courts of the Lord. "The river of thy pleasures;" literally, "of thine Eden." Is there here an allusion to the river which flowed peacefully through the garden of Eden when sin had not as yet tainted its bowers? Or is this phrase a declaration that of the pure joy which is in the heart of God he gives those to partake who are in communion with him? If so, here is a wonderful anticipation of the truth, "My peace I give unto you." 5. *Life.* (Ver. 9.) "The fountain of life." Here is a sublime expression of the doctrine which in modern phraseology is called "the origin of force"—a sublime expression thereof, however, on its moral and spiritual side. Such a phrase as this may well have been borne in mind by the Apostle John,<sup>1</sup> when he says of the Son of God, "In him was life." 6. *Light.* (Ver. 9.) "In thy light shall we see light." In how many senses this is true, and how richly it is true in every sense, it would require many homilies to show. We can but hint. Without God we can see no light anywhere. We have no basis for thought, no account to give of existence. Without the light from God to illumine our souls, we cannot see the glory of his love in creation. Without the enlightening and regenerating power of his Spirit, we cannot see the kingdom of God. But with God above, around, within, in what a blaze of light and glory may we live!<sup>2</sup> Note: What amazing bliss is ours, even now, when the fulness of God is made over to us in Christ through his Word and Spirit! Perfect judgment, loving-kindness, guardianship, living food, life, light! What more can we have?

III. THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS AS LAID HOLD OF BY BELIEVING MEN. When our God reveals himself thus to us as our God, it is but fitting and right that our hearts should respond to such revelation. A response we find here. It is fivefold. 1. *Here is an exultating sense of being in the possession of a precious treasure.* (Ver. 7.) "How excellent," etc. I rather, "How precious is thy loving-kindness, O God!" Indeed, it is. Precious beyond thousands of gold and silver; yea, "better than life" (Ps. lxxiii. 3; xliii. 4). God is our "exceeding Joy." Often and often may we muse with ever-increasing delight on the exhaustless stores of love which are ours in the heart of the infinite and eternal God (cf. Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27). 2. *Here is a sense of safety and repose in fleeing for refuge to God.* (Ver. 7.) "Put their trust;" literally, "flee for refuge" (cf. Ps. xci. 2). How intense the repose when we make God our Refuge! From the plots of men, from the strife of tongues, from perils of every kind, we can hide in God—blessed and safe in his almighty keeping. 3. *Here is a sense of satisfaction in the abundance of a Divine supply.* God's love is as meat and drink to us (cf. John vi.). When all the fulness of God is made over to us in Christ, we are indeed well supplied. We often want more of Christ; we never want more *than* Christ. 4. *The trust and love of the heart express themselves in prayer.* (1) For others (ver. 10). We may bear all the saints on our heart as intercessors before God. (2) For ourselves (ver. 11). That God would so prove himself to us to be all that he has promised to be, that we may never be moved from the right and safe path by any of the plots and snares of designing men. 5. *Already, in the anticipation of faith, we sing praise for delivering*

<sup>1</sup> Well says Bishop Alexander, "Of how much of St. John's theology is this verse the root!" ('The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity,' p. 259).

<sup>2</sup> The psychology of the natural man will not account for such a glorious psalm as this ever having been written by any one, anywhere, in any age of the world. It is high time for those who would subject exegesis to naturalistic psychological law to review the ground on which they profess to take their stand.

*grace.* (Ver. 12.) "There are the workers of iniquity fallen." "There!"—*emphatic. There they are!* I look on far ahead, and know that I shall triumph in redeeming love, and that I shall yet see those that plotted my ruin brought to nought, as Israel saw their foes dead on the seashore (Exod. xiv. 30, 31; Ps. xli. 6; xxxvii. 34—38; lxii. 8; lxiv. 7—10). (For the application of all this in its highest and grandest form, see Rom. viii. 34—39.) Let us trust God, brothers, while danger is nigh, and we shall shout in triumph when life's storms are over.—C.

Vers. 1—12.—We have here a *terrible picture of the wicked man*. I. HIS HEART IS THE SEAT OF EVIL. It is there as an "oracle." It is enthroned. It speaks with authority. It gives forth its decrees for obedience. The true is opposed by the false. Righteousness gives place to unrighteousness. All counsels of reason and compunctions of conscience are hushed by the cry, "No God!" (2 Thess. ii. 3, 4).

II. HIS LIFE IS MARKED BY ABANDONMENT TO EVIL. The power that rules the heart rules the life. There is progress in depravity, as in goodness. Gradually the sway of sin extends, till at last it works without check, without remorse, without remedy. You know a servant by the livery he wears, so when you see a man who sins wilfully and habitually, whose words and actions and manner of life are manifestly regulated without any fear of God, you cannot but regard such a man as a servant of sin (Rom. vi. 16; John viii. 34).

III. HIS CHARACTER IS FORMED UNDER THE POWER OF EVIL. Acts form habits, and habits character. The process is slow, but certain. What determines character is the power that worketh in us, be it good or be it evil (Gal. v. 17, 18). There is evil in all, but when the heart has been won back to God, the evil, though present, has lost its power. There is conflict, but the victory is sure for good, and not for evil. On the other hand, where evil still rules supreme, the result is of necessity—greater and greater degradation and corruption.

IV. HIS FUTURE IS DARK WITH THE PROGNOSTICS OF EVIL. To those who are living without God, the prospect in this life is gloomy and painful, but there is still hope. The voice of mercy is ever sounding in their ears, "Why will ye die?" As time passes, things grow darker. Guilt increases, the heart is hardened, and reformation becomes more and more improbable (Jer. xiii. 23). Again and again signs and warnings are given—precursors of the end, foreshadowings of the doom that awaits the impenitent. But they are unheeded. There is a terrible retention of character, and the future has no star of hope to light the gloom. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."—W. F.

Vers. 1—12.—*Aspice. Look around*, how distressing is the scene! *Look back*, it is the same tale of human care and crime. *Look before*, little to encourage, or to lead us to believe that things will be better than they are. But *look up*, and we can take heart, and speak one to another of better times. God reigns. Christ is at the right hand of the Father, to carry out his gracious purposes. Though there be much that is dark and depressing, yet we are able still to pray to God as "our Father," to say, "Thy kingdom come," and to assure our hearts of the final victory of love, for "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."

I. FROM THE FALSEHOOD OF MEN WE MAKE OUR COMPLAINT TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. Though men lie and beguile, God is true. His Word is truth. "He is faithful who hath promised." We may trust him utterly. Like him, let us also be faithful.

II. FROM THE INJUSTICE OF MEN WE MAY APPEAL TO THE JUSTICE OF GOD. Conscience within and the Law without bear witness that God is righteous. Justice is justice everywhere. Whatever be our lot here, we shall get right yonder. However basely men may behave to us, God will treat us fairly. The Judge of all the earth will do right. In this faith we can possess our souls in patience (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4; Jas. iv. 11, 12). Come what will, let us ever do that which is just and good to all men.

III. FROM THE SELFISHNESS OF MEN WE CAN TAKE REFUGE IN THE LOVE AND MERCY OF GOD. In trade and commerce and all the various businesses of the world, selfishness prevails. The rule is, "Every man for himself;" and the royal law, "Thou



shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is set at nought. Even in the Churches the leaven of selfishness is sadly operative. But "God is love." He is the great Giver. His delight is to show mercy, to do good and to communicate. He has come nearer than ever in Christ Jesus, and under the strong and loving covert of his wings we find refuge from all the oppressions and ills of life (ver. 7). Let us make it our habit more and more to abide with God. Christ is in the bosom of the Father, and it is as we "live together with Christ" that we abide in the love of God, and are comforted in all our troubles, defended in all our dangers, and strengthened for every good word and work.

"Only, O Lord, in thy dear love,  
Fit us for perfect rest above;  
And help us, this and every day,  
To live more nearly as we pray."

W. F.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Righteousness ; judgment ; loving-kindness.* There are three great sayings here which deserve our deepest study. First, God's "righteousness," that perfection of his character which secures perfect justice in all his doings. It is like "the mountains," so high that it is always above us, so fixed and stable that it cannot be moved. Then God's "judgments"—his ways, his dealings with men—are called a "great deep," as being in many respects beyond our sounding or measuring, unfathomable and full of mystery (Ps. lxxvii. 19). Last, there is God's providential care. It is said, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God!" (vers. 6, 7). But while these sayings are very striking and beautiful, looked at by themselves, they become vastly more significant and consolatory when we regard them in their relationship. Suppose we take the second, and place it in the light of the first and then of the third. In the "great deep" there is much that is awful and perplexing. But if there be mystery, this should not surprise us. We are but children. How can the finite comprehend the Infinite! But this mystery has its uses: it teaches us humility; it inspires us with reverence; it prepares the way for faith and hope and love. But much depends on our standpoint. See how different things become when we look at "the great deep" from the sure ground of the everlasting hills. It is significant that the psalmist speaks of the "mountains" before the "great deep," of the "righteousness" of God before his "judgments." Here is a lesson for us. Let us first make sure as to God's righteousness. Then when our hearts are established in this truth, we can look abroad without fear of the great deep of God's judgments. Even if, like Paul, tossed up and down "in Adria," the assurance of God's righteousness will give us peace, and sustain our hopes; and when we reach the shore again, we can look back, as from Melita, with thankful love and praise to God's ways and wonders in the deep. Then, further, when we take up the third great saying here, the light increases, and the sense of God's gracious presence and care becomes stronger and stronger. How often is it so in God's Word and works! Side by side with some grand manifestation of his greatness and majesty, we have some tender touch that speaks of his fatherly love and care. Whosoever, then, we are oppressed and appalled by the sight of the "great deep," let us call to mind, on the one hand, God's "righteousness;" and, on the other, God's love—that we may be comforted. Before us is the "great deep," with many things that are terrible and distressing—the shipwreck of dear hopes, the burying out of sight of beloved ones, the mystery of trial and of death—but, standing on the sure ground of God's righteousness, we may possess our souls in patience; and, contemplating the manifold and increasing proofs of God's love and goodness in our daily life, we may take heart, and say, "He cannot will me aught but good; I trust him utterly." Let us learn to take the right order in considering God's works. We should begin with what is plain and certain. We should study the dark things in the light of what is clear, the mysteries by what is revealed. Further, mark the importance of making much of common mercies, that we may be the better prepared for uncommon emergencies. God is educating us. When we know him as caring for us in little things, we can trust him to care for us in greater things (Matt. vi. 30—34). If we have learned to run with the footmen without being weary, we can better contend with horses. If we do our duty and serve God in the land of peace, then we shall be

the fitter to face the swelling of Jordan (Jer. xii. 5). Above all, let us remember that only in God can we find a sure Refuge from all trouble (ver. 7).

“Though griefs unnumbered throng thee round,  
Still in thy God confide;  
Whose finger marks the seas their bound,  
And curbs the headlong tide.”

W. F.

Vers. 1—12.—*The curse of wickedness and the blessedness of fellowship with God.* The psalmist complains of the moral corruption of his generation, and points the character of the time rather than any particular occurrence—unless “the foot of pride” in the eleventh verse may possibly refer to some invader that he dreaded. We have here a vivid description of the *curse* state of ingrained, deliberate wickedness, and of the *supreme blessedness of fellowship with God.*

I. THE CURSE OF INGRAINED, DELIBERATE WICKEDNESS. (Vers. 1—4.) Represented under two main aspects. 1. *The utter degeneracy of his thoughts.* (Vers. 1, 2.) Translate, “The oracle, or voice, of transgression is in the heart of the wicked;” i.e. evil is the sovereign voice that speaks to or commands him. It is the only imperative voice that he hears—not the voice of *conscience* or *duty*. As a consequence, he does not see or hear God, and, therefore, does not fear to transgress. More than this, he becomes complacent (“flatters himself”) in devising evil things as a sign of superior cleverness, and glories in hating rather than in loving. He is a fearful example of the total inversion of the moral order in all his thoughts. As a consequence, we have: 2. *The utter degeneracy of his conduct.* (Vers. 3, 4.) His words are the image of his thoughts—mischief and deceit. He has left off, turned from, every wise and good way of living, as a thing gone out of his esteem, forming no part of his purpose in life. He meditates only mischief on his bed, where other men remember the evil of the day, and repent; but he sinks to sleep or awakes from it in forming evil designs, setting himself into the direction of no good way, nor abhorring any evil.

II. THE SUPREME BLESSEDNESS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. (Vers. 5—10.) 1. *God's goodness makes him infinitely worthy of our trust.* (Vers. 5—7.) His mercy, faithfulness, righteousness, judgments, preserving providence, are all infinite and perfect, and those who trust in him live in the holiest, safest shelter—under the shadow of his wings overspreading the “mercy-seat.” 2. *God will abundantly satisfy all their greatest needs.* (Ver. 8.) They shall partake of the Divine satisfaction and joy—eat of the fatness of his house, and drink of the river of his pleasures. Because he is the Fountain of all life and the Substance of all light, and they who dwell with him shall draw his life into themselves, and see all things in the light of his presence. 3. *They became confident of the downfall of those who are unrighteously opposed to them.* (Vers. 11, 12.) “There!”—pointing as if to the scene of the ruin of his foes and the foes of God. Those who enjoy fellowship with God and Christ are assured that they too will at length conquer their spiritual foes, and enter fully into the kingdom that awaits them.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXXVII.

THIS is another of the alphabetical psalms (see above, Pss. ix., xxv., and xxxiv.), and, though more free from irregularities than the previous ones, is not altogether without them. While, generally, each letter heads a stanza consisting of two verses, there are three occasions on which the stanza assigned to a letter is formed of only one verse (see vers. 7, 20, and 34). Further, there are

two occasions when the stanza begins with a wrong letter, *h* taking the place of *y*, and *l* of *n*. These anomalies it has been proposed to get rid of by altering the text; but, to judge by the previous alphabetical psalms, absolute exactness was not at first aimed at in this form of composition.

The psalm is wholly didactic. It begins with exhortation, which is carried on through five stanzas to the end of ver. 9. Exhortation then gives place to calm and

unimpassioned instruction, of a character resembling that which makes up the bulk of the Book of Proverbs. This tone continues to the end of ver. 33, when there is a return to exhortation, but exhortation (vers. 34, 37) mingled with instruction (vers. 35, 36, 38—40). The whole poem is grave, quiet, equable, devoid of excitement or lyric fervour. It is unlike David's other compositions, but may be his, as asserted in the title, and may be the only composition which we possess of his belonging to his old age (ver. 25).

The object of the poem is to reassure men whose minds are disturbed by the fact of the frequent prosperity of the wicked, to convince them that in every case retribution will overtake the ungodly man at the last, and to impress upon them that the condition of the righteous, even when they suffer, is far preferable to that of the wicked, whatever prosperity they may enjoy.

Ver. 1.—Fret not thyself because of evil-doers. According to Aristotle, we have a special emotion implanted in our nature—*véneçis*—which causes us to “fret” when we witness undeserved prosperity (*Rhet.*, ii. 9, § 1). Certainly the feeling is very common and very strong; it is also characteristic of the best natures (see Ps. lxxiii. 3—14; Job xxi. 7—15; Jer. xii. 1, 2; Mal. iii. 15). The feeling does not need to be eradicated, but only to be held in check. Faith in God's retributive justice will enable us calmly to await “the end” (Ps. lxxiii. 17), in full assurance that ultimately God's vengeance will overtake the wicked man, and he will receive condign punishment. Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. Envy is not a natural passion. To envy the evil-doers on account of their prosperity is at once a folly and a danger. Their position is really not enviable; and, if we allow ourselves to envy them, we shall be tempted to follow their example (see Prov. xxiv. 1).

Ver. 2.—For they shall soon be cut down like the grass. So Zophar, in the Book of Job (xx. 5), “The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.” And, no doubt, if we compare time with eternity, the longest triumph that the wicked ever enjoy is but for a brief space, is soon gone, endures “but for a moment.” It has a continuance, however, which to men in this life seems long, often intolerably long; and hence the disturbance which men's minds suffer on account of it (Job xxi. 7, 18; Ps. lxxiii. 3—

16). And wither as the green herb (comp. Ps. xc. 5, 6; ciii. 15; Isa. xl. 6, 7; Jas. i. 10, 11; 1 Pet. i. 24).

Ver. 3.—Trust in the Lord, and do good. Notwithstanding any difficulty which the prosperity of the wicked causes thee, trust thou still in the Lord; be sure that his providence watches over thee, and endeavour still to serve him by “doing good.” So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed; rather, *dwell in the land, and feed on faithfulness* (Kay); i.e. remain where thou art, and be satisfied with the thought of God's faithfulness. Feed on this.

Ver. 4.—Delight thyself also in the Lord. Draw from communion with God all that inward intensity of joy which it is capable of giving. And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. God will then grant thee all thy desires, and make thee perfectly happy.

Ver. 5.—Commit thy way unto the Lord (comp. Prov. xvi. 3; Ps. xxii. 8). The meaning is, “Cast thyself and thy life unreservedly upon God—yield thyself wholly to him—look to him for support and guidance.” Trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. “He will accomplish all that thy faith has laid upon him” (Kay).

Ver. 6.—And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. If the prosperity of the wicked frets thee, because it seems to obscure thy righteousness, since while he appears to bask in the sunshine of God's favour, thy life is possibly overshadowed by clouds and darkness, be sure that, in the end, this seeming injustice will be remedied. God will not frown on thee always; one day he will turn on thee the light of his countenance, and make thy righteousness to shine forth like the sun in its noonday splendour.

Ver. 7.—Rest in the Lord; literally, *be silent*; i.e. do not murmur; make no complaint; be silently acquiescent and resigned. And wait patiently for him. Be content to await his time, which is sure to be the right time. Meanwhile possess your soul in patience. Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way (comp. ver. 1, of which this brings out the sense). It is when the ungodly prosper that the righteous are apt to repine. Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. It is the success of the ungodly in their wicked plots and schemes which especially vexes the righteous (see Job ix. 24; xii. 6; xxi. 7—9; xxiv. 2—12; Ps. lxxii. 5—12, etc.).

Ver. 8.—Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; i.e. such anger and such wrath as the prosperity of the wicked calls forth. Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil;

rather, *fret not thyself, only to do evil*. No result could be looked for from the sort of "fretting" spoken of, but an evil one. If men will dwell unduly on the fact of the prosperity of the wicked, and brood upon it in their hearts, they will be apt, in the first instance, to envy the wicked, which is at once "to do evil;" and from this they will be naturally tempted to go on to an imitation of their wicked practices, which is to assimilate themselves altogether to the enemies of God, and to be guilty of practical apostasy (comp. Ps. lxxiii. 2, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked").

Ver. 9.—For evil-doers shall be cut off. It is foolish to "fret" and rage and storm against the ungodly whom we see prospering, since they will certainly be "cut off" sooner or later—sooner rather than later, according to the belief of the writer (see vers. 2, 10). But those that wait upon the Lord (see ver. 7), they shall inherit the earth. It is doubly foolish, since when the wicked are "cut off," as they will be assuredly some day, the godly will find themselves the inheritors of the earth. This prophecy is partially fulfilled from time to time, and will find its complete fulfilment in the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 13).

Ver. 10.—For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be (compare the comment on ver. 2). Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be; or, *he shall not be*. He shall have been swept away; his "place shall know him no more" (Ps. ciii. 16).

Ver. 11.—But the meek shall inherit the earth. This prophecy is endorsed by our Lord (Matt. v. 5). It has only had occasional fulfilment hitherto, notably in Moses, the meekest man of his day (Numb. xii. 3); to some extent in St. Louis and other great saints, whose influence has been world-wide, as St. Francis d'Assisi, St. Francis Xavier, St. Carlo Borromeo, and others. And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Being men of peace, the meek, when they "inherit the earth," will establish universal peace (Isa. ii. 4; xi. 6—9; lxv. 25; Ezek. xxxiv. 25) and "delight in the abundance of it" (comp. Ps. lxxii. 7).

Ver. 12.—The wicked plotteth against the just (comp. Pss. xxxi. 13; xxxv. 4, 7, etc.). Wicked men commonly lay their plots against the righteous, as being less likely to suspect them, and perhaps as less likely to resist their machinations. And gnasheth upon him with his teeth (comp. Ps. xxxv. 16).

Ver. 13.—The Lord shall laugh at him (comp. Ps. ii. 4; lix. 8; and see the com-

ment on the former passage). For he seeth that his day is coming; i.e. God sees that the day of the wicked man's visitation is approaching (see above, vers. 2, 9, 10; and comp. 1 Sam. xxvi. 10).

Ver. 14.—The wicked have drawn out the sword, and bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy. David is perhaps thinking especially of his own persecutors, Saul and Absalom, who pursued after him with armed men, and sought his life (1 Sam. xxiii. 8, 14, 26; xxiv. 2; xvi. 2; 2 Sam. xvii. 24—26; xviii. 6—8). But he may also have in his mind the raids that powerful chiefs made upon their weak and peaceful neighbours (Job xxiv. 5—12). And to slay such as be of a right conversation; or, *such as are upright in way*; i.e. such as lead a righteous life.

Ver. 15.—Their sword shall enter into their own heart. Such as "take the sword" often "perish by the sword" (Matt. xxvi. 52). Absalom's rebellion cost him his life. Marauders would sometimes meet with a stout resistance, and be slain by those whom they had intended to plunder. And their bows shall be broken; i.e. they shall meet with failure.

Ver. 16.—A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked (comp. Prov. xv. 16; xvi. 8).

Ver. 17.—For the arms of the wicked shall be broken (comp. Ps. x. 15). The wicked shall be disabled from doing more mischief. If not slain outright, they shall return from the combats that they have provoked with shattered weapons (ver. 15) and damaged persons. But the Lord upholdeth the righteous. Their adversaries in the encounters.

Ver. 18.—The Lord knoweth the days of the upright; literally, *of the perfect*—those who yield him a complete obedience. God takes loving note of their days, knows their number, and the events which each day will bring. He will cause all things to "work together for their good." And their inheritance shall be for ever (comp. vers. 27, 29, and 37; which all, like this verse, point, albeit vaguely, to a future life). The mere continuance of a man's posterity in a prosperous condition cannot exhaust the meaning of such phrases as, "Their inheritance shall be for ever;" "Dwell for evermore;" "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever." If David himself meant no more than this, yet the Holy Spirit which inspired him may have meant more. At any rate, to the Christian the words will always bring up the thought of that "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, which is reserved for us in heaven" (1 Pet. i. 4).

Ver. 19.—They shall not be ashamed in the evil times. If they fall into adversity, it will not cause them to feel shame. They will know that they are not being punished for evil-doing, but that God is trying them and purifying them (Job xxxvi. 8—11). And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 19).

Ver. 20.—But the wicked shall perish (comp. vers. 2, 9, 10, 15, 36); literally, *for the wicked shall perish*. The happiness of the righteous cannot be complete until the wicked are removed out of their way; since, so long as they continue in the world, they will be ever vexing the righteous and troubling them (Ps. lvi. 1). And the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs. So, many of the old commentators, as Aquila, Kimchi, and others; and among moderns, Rosenmüller, and Professor Alexander. But the bulk of recent critics translate, *as the excellency of the pastures* (Hupfeld, Kay, Hengstenberg, Canon Cook, Cheyne, Revised Version); i.e. the rich herbage which is burnt up by the heat of summer (comp. ver. 2). Both translations seem to be tenable; but the latter is perhaps preferable, since the consumption of the fat of lambs upon the altar is connected with the idea, not of rejection, but of acceptance. Into smoke shall they consume away (comp. Ps. cii. 3).

Ver. 21.—The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again. The wicked man borrows with a light heart, though he may have no prospect of ever being able to repay. Living under God's curse (ver. 22), he is for the most part not able to repay; when he happens to be able, he is often not willing. But the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth (comp. Ps. cxii. 5, 9). The righteous has not often need to borrow (see Deut. xv. 6; xxviii. 12, 44). Rather, he lends and gives freely.

Ver. 22.—For such as be blessed of him (i.e. God) shall inherit the earth (see above, ver. 11). And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off (see above, ver. 9).

Ver. 23.—The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; rather, *established*; i.e. upheld, and made firm. It is not the general superintendence of men's steps and goings by God (Prov. xvi. 9; xx. 24) which is here spoken of; but the special strengthening and supporting of the steps of the pious. The word *נָבַר* must be understood, not of the ordinary man, but of the good man. (*נָבַר*, *vir*, scilicet *justi*, et *Jova benedicti*," Rosenmüller). And he delighteth in his way. He "knows" it (Ps. i. 6), and looks upon it with favour, and even "has pleasure" in it (Ps. xxxv. 27).

Ver. 24.—Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down. "The difference," as Hengstenberg observes, "is that between

misfortune or loss, and absolute ruin." The good man may be afflicted; he may even fall into some fault (Gal. vi. 1) or grievous sin (2 Sam. xi. 4); but so long as "the root of the matter is in him" (Job xix. 28), God will not suffer him to be prostrated. For the Lord upholdeth him with his hand; literally, *the Lord supports his hand*. If he falls, God (as Luther says) "catches him by the hand, and raises him up again." So David had himself experienced (2 Sam. xii. 13).

Ver. 25.—I have been young, and now am old. It is most natural to understand this literally, and to gather from it that the psalmist, whether David or another, composed this psalm in advanced life. It has certainly all the gravity, calmness, seriousness, and tone of authority which befit a teacher of many years and much experience. Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. The social condition of the Israelites was very unlike that of modern European communities. Though there were rich and poor among them, there could scarcely be any that were very poor. Where there was a general obligation upon all well-disposed persons to lend to such as were in need, and no interest could be asked upon loans, and in the year of jubilee all debts were remitted, and mortgaged lands returned to their original owners or their families, actual begging was scarcely possible, and at any rate could only be brought about by extreme and reckless misconduct. Many philanthropists believe that even at the present time in our own country mendicancy is nearly always the consequence of persistence in evil courses. Still more must this have been the case in Palestine in the time of the monarchy (see Prov. xx. 4).

Ver. 26.—He is ever merciful, and lendeth (comp. ver. 21). This psalm contains a good deal of repetition, perhaps intended to emphasize certain portions of its teaching (see vers. 1, 7, 8; 3, 27; 11, 22, 29; 7, 34, etc.). And his seed is blessed (comp. Ps. xxv. 13; cii. 28; cxii. 2).

Ver. 27.—Depart from evil, and do good. The same injunction is given, in exactly the same words, in Ps. xxxiv. 14. And dwell for evermore. This is to be understood as a promise, "If thou wilt depart from evil, and do good, then thou shalt dwell in the land for ever" (comp. ver. 3).

Ver. 28.—For the Lord loveth judgment (comp. Ps. xi. 7). "Judgment" *מִשְׁפָּט*—is here "justice," "righteousness;" as in Ps. xxxiii. 5; xcix. 4; ciii. 6, etc. And forsaketh not his saints (see ver. 25; and comp. Isa. xli. 17; xlii. 16, etc.). They are preserved for ever. Something has probably fallen out at the commencement of

this line, which ought to begin with the letter *ain*. But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The wicked shall perish, not only in their own persons, but in their posterity, who shall be "cut off from the land of the living" (Isa. liii. 8), and have "their name blotted out" (Ps. cix. 13).

Ver. 29.—The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever (comp. vers. 3, 9, 11, 18, 22, 28, 34; and Prov. ii. 21). Bishop Butler sagaciously remarks that this is the natural tendency of things, if sufficient time be given, and accidental hindrances removed ('Analogy,' pt. i. ch. iv.).

Ver. 30.—The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom. (On the essential union of wisdom with goodness, see the Proverbs, *passim*.) And his tongue talketh of judgment; i.e. utters only what is morally right, and in accordance with truth and goodness. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." A good man out of the good treasure of his heart can only bring forth good things (Matt. xii. 34, 35).

Ver. 31.—The Law of his God is in his heart (comp. Deut. vi. 6; Ps. xl. 8; cxix. 11; Isa. li. 7). None of his steps shall slide. The two facts are associated as cause and effect. The having the Law of God in his heart prevents his sliding or going astray.

Ver. 32.—The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. Wicked men hate righteous men, as being a reproach to them, and also as being a hindrance and a danger. The righteous thwart their plans, oppose their proceedings, often frustrate their counsels. Sometimes their opposition brings the wicked man into peril, as when it takes the shape of prosecution before a court, or of help given to one who has fallen among thieves. Hence the hatred felt by the wicked towards the righteous is not surprising. It leads the wicked to entertain murderous thoughts—to be ever "watching" for an opportunity when he may take the righteous man at a disadvantage, and, if no other means of removing him from his path present themselves, kill him. Modern civilization, with its precautions and "resources," prevents actual violence for the most part; but the murderous instinct remains, and even now, in his heart, many a wicked man is a murderer.

Ver. 33.—The Lord will not leave him in his hand. God, as a general rule, does not allow the wicked man to work his will upon the righteous. He interposes one check or another, and saves the righteous man from destruction. Nor condemn him when he is judged; i.e. nor will he allow him to be condemned when the wicked man brings an accusation against him, and seeks to have him sentenced to death by an ignorant or

unjust judge. These promises are not universal nor absolute, since many good men have been assassinated by their enemies, as Abel by Cain; and many have been wrongfully condemned to death and executed, as Naboth at the instigation of Jezebel.

Ver. 34.—Wait on the Lord (comp. vers. 2, 5, 7; and Ps. xxvii. 14; lxii. 5; cxix. 5; Prov. xx. 22). The injunction is repeated so often because of man's extreme impatience and unwillingness to "tarry the Lord's leisure" (Prayer-book Version of Ps. xxvii. 14) trustfully and confidently. And keep his way. The way in which he would have them walk—the way of righteousness (comp. ver. 3). And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land (see ver. 29, and the comment *ad loc.*). When the ungodly are cut off, thou shalt see it (comp. Ps. lii. 5, 6; xci. 8). Doubtless with some satisfaction. As the "ungodly" spoken of are employed in watching for an occasion to "slay" the righteous (ver. 32), these last can scarcely witness their removal from the world by God's providence without a feeling of relief.

Ver. 35.—I have seen the wicked in great power, and flourishing like a green bay tree; rather, as in the margin, *like a green tree in his own* (or, *his native*) *soil*. Growing, i.e., rankly and luxuriantly, like a leafy shrub, that has never suffered transplantation (comp. Ps. i. 3; Ezek. xxxi. 3).

Ver. 36.—Yea, he passed away, and lo, he was not (cf. Job xx. 5; Ps. lxxiii. 19, 20). Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. The sudden disappearance of an imposing personality astonishes and confuses us. We cannot believe that one who has played so prominent a part in our drama of life is gone altogether. We look about for him; we expect him to reappear at any moment. We cannot realize the fact that he is vanished for ever. We ask ourselves, "Where is he?" (Job xx. 7).

Ver. 37.—Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. This translation is much disputed. Most ancients and many moderns render the first line, "Keep innocency, and observe uprightness," while some critics maintain that *acharith* in the second line must mean "posterity," and not "end." Others, again, join *shalom* to *ish*, and render, "There shall be posterity (or, a future) to the man of peace." However, the rendering of the Authorized Version is retained by our Revisers, and accepted in part by Hengstenberg and Dr. Kay, while it has the complete approval of Canon Cook.

Ver. 38.—But the transgressors shall be destroyed together (comp. vers. 2, 9, 10, 15, 20, and 34). The end of the wicked shall be cut off. If *acharith* be taken to mean "pos-

terity" in the preceding verse, it must be given the same signification here.

Ver. 39.—But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord (comp. Ps. iii. 8; lxviii. 20, etc.). He is their Strength in the time of trouble (see Ps. xviii. 1; xli. 1, etc.). The last two verses sum up the teaching of the psalm, and indicate its especial object, which was to encourage and sustain the righteous under their trials, by the assurance that they were under the special protection of God, who, whenever trouble threatened, would stand forth as their Strength and Defence, and would ultimately be their "Salvation." The full meaning of this last ex-

pression was left obscure, though enough was said to raise the hope that this world was not the end of everything, but rather the beginning.

Ver. 40.—And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him. The ground of God's favour towards the righteous, and the ground moreover of their righteousness itself (ver. 3), is their trust in him. Trusting in him, they have taken his Law for their rule of life, and made it their constant endeavour to serve and please him.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 4.—*Delight in God.* "Delight thyself," etc. The order of these words makes all the difference between a religion of selfishness and a religion of love. Not, "The Lord will give you what your heart is set on; therefore delight in him;" but, "Delight thyself in the Lord; let him be thy Joy—Fountain of happiness and Object of desire; then thy most earnest petitions, deepest wants, highest aspirations, shall all be satisfied in him." Delight in God includes satisfaction and joy—

I. IN GOD HIMSELF. That is, so far as he has made himself known to us—who and what he is, in whom we have our being. 1. His glory as the eternal and infinite Creator; his power, wisdom, goodness, perpetual presence and unfailing care of his universe. 2. Yet more in his character—his love, righteousness, unchangeable truth (John i. 18; xiv. 9).

II. IN OUR PERSONAL RELATION TO HIM—THAT HE IS OUR GOD AND FATHER. (1 John iii. 1; Eph. ii. 1—10.) There is nothing selfish, presumptuous, or exclusive in this joy. The more we have it, the humbler we shall be; more desirous that others should share it; more qualified to influence them to seek and obtain it.

III. IN CONVERSE WITH HIM. This is the most marked and glorious characteristic of the psalms generally—real, living communion with God (comp. Phil. iv. 4—7).

IV. IN OBEDIENCE TO HIM. "To live in the fear of God is not without its pleasure. It composes the soul, expels the vanity which is not without vexation, represses exorbitant motions, checks unruly passions, keeps all within in a pleasant, peaceful calm" (John Howe).

CONCLUSION. There is a deep secret of a happy life—must we not say a sadly neglected secret, even among real Christians? Unselfish delight in God is doubtless a high attainment. But is it out of reach? Surely not, when to the glorious knowledge of all that God is in himself is added the blessed certainty that he is our Father in Christ Jesus. This should be sunshine in darkest days. Yet let no Christian be discouraged because consciously very deficient in this respect. "That some are less sensibly and passionately moved with the great things of God (and even with the discovery of his love) than some others, doth not argue them to have less of the Spirit, but more of that temper which better comports with deeper judgment and a calm consideration of things. . . . Though flax set on fire will flame more than iron, yet withal it will smoke more, and will not glow so much, nor keep heat so long" (Howe).

Ver. 7.—*The rest of the soul.* "Rest in the Lord." If any age ever needed a gospel of rest, it is this in which we live. We often call it "this busy age." But it is more than busy—it is restless. Men pride themselves on "living fast." They seek excitement, not refreshment, in their very pleasures. Amusement becomes not recreation, reinvigoration, restful play, fitting you to return with fresh strength and vigour to work, but often an exhausting demand and strain. You are weary after your holiday, not rested. It was a wise as well as a gracious voice which said to the disciples, "Come ye apart, and rest" (Mark vi. 31).

**I. WE NEED REST.** 1. *Physical rest*, in due amount, is a very deep need of life. At our peril we despise it. There are forms of animal life which are sleepless, but they are of very low types. The child, for many years, needs to spend half his life in sleep. The strong man needs from a quarter to a third of his time for sleep; and he must not give his waking hours to unnecessary toil, or body and mind will fail under the strain. We are not to think the time spent in sleep sheer waste. The schoolboy knows his task better when he wakes than over-night. You are wiser for "sleeping over" a question. As a new building requires time to *settle*, so, it seems, do our thoughts. "He giveth his beloved sleep" (Ps. xxvii. 2). 2. No less do *we need mental rest*—repose of soul, heart, intellect. Rest from doubt in certainty of truth. From care, in trust. From life's turmoil, in the quieting presence of things unseen and eternal. From the world, in solitary converse with our Father and our Saviour. From restlessness, in *peace*; not insensibility, not inertness or carelessness, but inward calm.

**II. GOD IS THE SOUL'S REST.** God has made all creation full of delight and profit for man, but not provided full satisfaction, perfect peace, anywhere but in himself. Faith is not a sudden *snatch*, but an abiding hold. Like the ivy, the soul climbs by clinging close; and as the ivy cannot cling while tossed to and fro by the wind, so the soul must cease to be agitated by stormy restless desires, if it is to take close, strong, peaceful hold on God. Rest in God includes: 1. *Reconciliation*. It would be absurd to speak of *resting in God* while our heart is at enmity with him, estranged from him, or careless, ignorant, doubtful, about our personal relation to him. One or other of these must be the case unless we are what Scripture calls *reconciled to God*. The "glad tidings" is the "word of reconciliation" in a twofold sense: (1) The message and witness of the *fact* that God has provided atonement (2 Cor. v. 19; Rom. v. 10). (2) The message of personal invitation—not to Jews, heathen, atheists, notorious offenders, as such, but to men as men, to each one as a sinner (2 Cor. v. 20). Nature has no gospel. It is Christ who interprets for us the teaching, else unintelligible, of the lilies and the birds (Matt. vi. 26, etc.). It is his voice—the voice of the Father speaking through the Son—that says, "I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). 2. The rest of *absolute submission to God's will*, is what he sometimes calls us to. A hard lesson, but holy, profitable, with an after-fruit of peace. Not the highest form of faith, but indispensable to its completeness. For God does not cease to be our Creator, our Sovereign, when we become "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." 3. The rest of *unlimited trust*. Not mere lying still in God's hand or at the feet of Jesus; not (as the "Quietists" taught) annihilation of our own will or of personal self; the calm energy of the soul, *willingly* placing all in God's hand. Not the stillness of the stagnant pool, but the calm of the deep lake through which a steady current flows. Christ was not *passive* in Gethsemane; the whole force of his will and purpose was gathered up in "Not my will," etc.

Ver. 23.—*Vindication of God's supreme and gracious providence*. "The steps," etc. (see Revised Version). The theme of this noble psalm is the vindication of God's supreme and gracious providence, and the confirmation of faith tried by the vicissitudes of life, the prosperity of evil-doers, and trials of the righteous.

**I. IN THE WIDEST SENSE HUMAN LIFE**—"the steps of [each] man," the path in which he treads—**IS UNDER GOD'S GUIDANCE**; upheld by his power, directed by his counsel (Prov. xx. 24). As a journey is made up of single steps, and one false step may be fatal; so life, of momentary experiences and acts of choice, of which the greatest may hinge on the least. Life or death may hang on a pair of damp sheets or wet shoes, or a whiff of poisoned air. The fate of an empire may turn on the flight of a bullet. A spider's web spun across a dark opening has saved a fugitive from his persecutors. A successful career or a happy home may be owing to a chance meeting. If, therefore, God rules human affairs, he must foresee and control their most minute and secret causes.

**II. GOD BESTOWS SPECIAL GUIDANCE ON HIS CHILDREN.** "The steps of a *good man*," etc. (Authorized Version). "Established," is the proper meaning of the Hebrew word; not only directed, but made firm, planted evenly and safely. This word "good," inserted by our old translators, seems a bold interpolation; but, in fact, it does but express the *spirit* of the whole passage. It is of the "meek," the "righteous," the "upright,"



the man who delights in the Lord, rests in him, waits on him, the psalm speaks (vers. 3, 4, 7, 11, 16, 18). Such phrases as "special providence" are sometimes ignorantly used, sometimes as ignorantly found fault with. Wrongly used, if it be supposed that God's control is occasional, not perpetual and universal; wrongly objected to, if it is forgotten that at any moment God's guidance may have some special end in view, some immediate result. There are three reasons why God's children—namely, those who are living the life of faith—obtain this special guidance and may count on it. (1) They ask for it. (2) They follow and yield to it. (3) It is possible in their case, as it is not in the case of an ungodly life. They have the teaching of God's Word, which the ungodly person neglects; and the teaching of God's Spirit, which he does not believe in or desire (Rom. viii. 14). Further, God has a different end in view for them (Rom. ii. 7, 8).

**PRACTICAL CONCLUSION.** 1. If we desire God to guard and guide and prosper our whole life-journey, we must ask him to guide every step. We are warranted in asking and expecting his leading in the least matters as truly as in the greatest. We should not willingly move a step without him. We must be prepared at every step to let him choose, remembering Ps. cvi. 15. 2. What shall we say to those who have never yet taken the one first step into the right and safe path (John v. 40; Prov. xvi. 25)? "There is but a step between" you "and death." But also, one God-guided step will bring you to the feet of the Saviour, who is pledged to turn none away (John vi. 37).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1-40.—The good man's directory.** This is a very remarkable psalm. Its theme is one throughout its entire length. Yet it is not so much drawn out consecutively as repeated proverbially. This may be partly accounted for by its alphabetical structure.<sup>1</sup> There is no advance between the verses at the commencement and those at its close, but rather a remarkable variety of beautiful turns of expression to a thought that is the same throughout. The whole psalm may be summed up thus: "Just now, you see the wicked prospering and the ungodly depressed. Do not fret over this. Trust, do right, rest in the Lord, wait and see. And by-and-by you will find that the righteous are brought out to the light, while the wicked are relegated to forgetfulness and shame. Even now to have God in the heart with a crust in the hand, is better than to have the riches of many wicked. God will, in his own time and way, appear for his faithful ones, and prove the truth of his ancient word, 'Them that honour me, I will honour.'" So far as the text of the psalm is concerned, there is little to call for laboured criticism, though the Hebrew student would do well to examine minutely the second halves of the third and thirty-seventh verses. For the most part the psalm is delightfully plain and clear; and nowhere could any better rule or directory for life be found than is herein contained. In our homiletic treatment of it we will notice—

**I. THE SEVERAL DUTIES HERE ENJOINED ON THE GOOD MAN.** These duties are put into a form suggested by the circumstances which surrounded the writer. When David wrote this psalm he was an old man. Looking back on the scenes of past observation and experience, he had witnessed many strange inequalities on the surface of society. Looking in one direction, he had often beheld an ungodly man enjoying all that heart could wish, so far as this world was concerned; and in another direction he had as often seen a good man, one who walked closely with God, in the midst of trial, affliction, and distress. This state of things had perplexed him, and he knew that it still perplexed the righteous. To meet their perplexities and to assuage them, this psalm was penned; and it is this purpose which forms the background of thought throughout the entire length of the psalm. 1. The first injunction is "*fret not*" (ver. 1). Do not worry or perplex yourself about these mysteries of God's providence. Even if the lot of the wicked seems more easy, more pleasant, more prosperous than yours, yet "they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb;" besides, "a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." God's people are infinitely better off, with him as their heavenly Friend, than any of

<sup>1</sup> No student should leave unnoticed Kirkpatrick's very thoughtful notes on this psalm.

the ungodly are, with all their noise and parade. 2. Hence a second duty is presented to us: "*Trust*" and "*Rest in the Lord*." Two expressions for substantially the same attitude of spirit. But this restful trusting is put in contrast from fretting. Your work is not to worry, but to trust your God. Now, in what sense is this intended? Let us picture the good man under the difficulty to which we have referred. He sees the ungodly in high places, while he is obscure, depressed, afflicted; and he wonders what it means. Now, in what sense is such a one to trust in the Lord? He is to trust in God, believing that such a state of things is known and permitted by him in infinite wisdom; that this state of things is perfectly consistent with God's love for his people; that God has some wise and holy end in permitting it—to prove him and to improve him; and that he will see that end, either in this world or in the next. 3. Then there follows a third duty: "*Wait patiently*." If we are content to wait and let God's methods in providence open up before us, we shall see the ungodly cut down (vers. 2, 9, 10, 15, 17, 20, 25, 36, 38); that God will give us the desires of our heart, and graciously clear our way (vers. 4, 5); that though we may have been misunderstood and misrepresented for a time, yet God will clear us and our reputation in the long run (ver. 6); that God will grant the true possession and peaceful enjoyment of life to the meek and loyal (ver. 11); that the little of the righteous brings far more joy than the much of the wicked (ver. 16); that he will be upheld where others fall (ver. 17); that supplies shall be sent to the saint even in days of famine (ver. 19); that step by step will be taken under the ordering of a Divine Guide (ver. 23); that even in falling he shall not perish, for to him shall be shown a Divine upholding grace (ver. 24); that the righteous man will leave a blessed inheritance to his children,—peace was his in life, and peace shall follow his children when he is gone to his rest (ver. 37); that his life is but an outworking of God's great salvation (vers. 39, 40). It is not in youth that all this can be seen, but if we believe God when we are young, we shall have proved him ere we are old. Only let us "wait patiently." There is a vast unfolding plan, which, if we are wise to observe, will be ever revealing to us "the loving-kindness of the Lord." 4. And thus we are led on to a fourth duty—that of *obedience*. (Ver. 3.) "Trust in the Lord, and do good," i.e. "*do right*." In ver. 34 the same duty is expressed in another phrase, "Wait on the Lord, and keep his way." Trusting and trying, resting and working, are to go together. We are to find out what God would have us do in the sphere in which he has placed us; then to trust in the Lord, be strong, and do it. And we may "do right" (ver. 3), or, in other words, we may "keep his way" (ver. 34) in one or other of two methods. By *actively doing* the Divine will; and this is probably what most of us are called on to do—to pursue with energy the duties in active life that are set before us. Now, we may fulfil these: (1) In attending at each moment to the duty of the moment; simply doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, and with the distinct aim and purpose of pleasing God. May be our calling is not that which we should prefer, and yet we see no way open to any other. When God does open a way in another direction, by all means let us follow it. But, meanwhile, be it ours simply to do the work which lies before us, with a readiness and cheerfulness that befit those whose sole aim is to please God. (2) In the cultivation of holiness we may "do right," ever setting the Lord before us, and aiming to follow him who "left us an example, that we should follow his steps." (3) In personal efforts to help, to relieve, to comfort, or to serve another, we may do right. In this respect, as well as others, "it is accepted, according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." But we may "do right" also by *patiently bearing* the Divine will; and sometimes this is all the believer can do—simply to bear what God has laid upon him. Nor is there a nobler sight on earth than to see one who, racked with pain or wrapped in obscurity, can say, "My lot is appointed me by my Father's will; all that will is love, and therefore I can cheerfully bear it. If my Father were to give the rod unto my own hands, I would give it back to him, saying, 'Father, thou knowest best; do with me as seemeth good in thy sight.'" Why, such a one, though he never goes outside the doors of his own house from one year's end to another, is a missionary to the Church and to the world! Preach fervently as we may by words, we cannot preach like these suffering saints! But we must notice—

II. THE CONNECTION THERE IS BETWEEN THESE SEVERAL DUTIES. We have specified

them under four heads. 1. Fret not. 2. Trust. 3. Wait patiently. 4. Do right. These four may be reduced to two : trusting and trying ; or, in other words, to resting and working. Both are included in the verse already quoted. "Trust in the Lord, and do right." While these duties in combination make up "the whole duty of man," they are so connected together that neither can be discharged without the other. *If we do not trust in God, we cannot do the right, and if we do not desire to do right, we have no right to trust in God.* What, then, is the relation between them ? At least a fourfold one. 1. *Trust in God ensures the peace of mind which fits a man for work.* *E.g.* take a tradesman in business, whose affairs are going down, and who will soon find himself on the wrong side of the balance-sheet. It is impossible for him to go about his business with the energy it requires, especially in these times. But put the man's affairs straight ; tell him that everything is set right, and that by-and-by he will find himself in a better position than at present,—and you put new life into the man. When he knows that all is right, he can set about his work with all the zest that is needed. So it is here. There once were two burdens pressing on the heart. The one, of his spiritual interests, the other, of his temporal care. What has become of these ? The first, the burden of guilt, he has laid at the foot of the cross. The second, the load of earthly care, he brings day by day, and casts it upon his God. Thus he has nothing left to care for, nothing left to be anxious about. Hence, the peace of God passing all understanding keeps his heart and mind in Christ Jesus ; and, consequently, with unburdened heart, he can go about the work his Father has given him to do. 2. *Trusting in God ensures the reception of strength for the discharge of work.* "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ;" "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." So runs the promise, and so runs experience too. Strength according to the days ; strength sure as the days ; strength to the end of the days. Such will be the uniform result of "waiting on God all the day." 3. *Trusting in God supplies a man with motives to perform his work.* If I am permitted to trust in God, then honour requires that I shall do right ; for I trust in God for strength to perform his will ; hence when I ask for strength there is a tacit pledge that the strength received from God shall be spent in obedience to God. And not only so, but *gratitude also requires that I should do right.* If I receive of God's strength, how can I but gratefully spend it for him ? And *the honour of religion* requires that I should do right. For if I tell the world I am trusting in God, and yet fail to do right, what will the worldling say ? What can he say, but this ?—"Either your God is not the God you say he is, or else you have not the trust in him which you profess to have." If we want the world to believe in God, if we want them to give us credit for sincerity, we must show that, while we trust in God, we also do right. 4. *Trusting in God gives a man a guarantee of the successful issue of his work.* Is it mine to trust in God ? Can I, under all circumstances, repose in him ? Then I know that, to the very last, all shall be well. He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Trusting in him, we will dare to work, to suffer, or to die. 5. *Trusting in God will ensure a blessing to those on whom our work may afterwards fall.* (Ver. 37, Hebrew and Revised Version margin, compared with ver. 38, Hebrew.) The good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children. "The generation of the upright shall be blessed." The Old Testament does not project our thought into our own future life after death as the New Testament does, but it lays very much stress on the effect of a man's life on the generations which will follow him on earth : this is in accordance with Deut. vii. 9. And there can be no manner of doubt that the posterity of a man of trained righteousness, integrity, and piety, even though he be a poor man, will have the best of all legacies—*pious poverty, God's blessing, and a father's prayers.* We do not say that young people are now taught too much to look to their future life, but we do venture to affirm that far too little stress is laid upon, and mention is far too seldom made of, the thought of the effect of parental character upon posterity. The law of heredity is stronger than that of environment ; or, to put the same truth in somewhat antique form, "Grace does not run in the blood, but it purifies it." 6. *Trusting in God ensures a man of a home in God when the earthly work is over.* Even when flesh and heart fail, God is the Strength of our heart, and our Portion for ever !—C.

Vers. 1—40.—*Two pictures.* The psalmist says, at ver. 25, "I have been young, and

now am old." We may regard him therefore as speaking in this psalm with the fulness of knowledge and the confidence of ripened wisdom. His old experience has attained to prophetic strain. Let us consider two pictures.

I. **THE EVILS OF ENVY.** It is common. It takes its rise and works upon the lower part of our nature, blinding our minds, perverting our hearts, and stirring up all our evil passions. It "frets" us with a sense of our inferiority; it "frets" us with a feeling of the injustice with which we are treated; it "frets" us with a proud consciousness of *what we would have done*, if only things had been otherwise, and we had fair opportunities. In these and other ways it breaks our peace and embitters our lives. And yet how useless is envy as a resource amidst the ills of life! Instead of remedying, it only aggravates our troubles. Nothing but evil can come of evil. Envy leads not only to waste, but to worry, and not only to worry, but to wearing away of our powers, as by the slow and insidious progress of disease. Besides, envy is manifestly unreasonable in view of *the realities of character*. The prosperity of the wicked is vain and delusive. Look to the tendencies of things, look to the effect upon character, look to the end, and then see how, even in the deepest sense, it is infinitely better to have little with a clear conscience, than a full purse of unrighteous gains; to take the lowest place among men, with the love of God, than lands and heritages and the highest honours of the world, by the sacrifice of truth and righteousness. Moreover, envy is in reality a *grievous offence against God*. We are slow to admit this. We regard "fretfulness" as more an unhappy temper than a sin. But in this we err. "Envy" implies dissatisfaction with God's government, distrust of his justice, and doubt of his truth. When we give way to "envy," we place ourselves first, and as good as say, "If God were just, if he really loved us and cared for us, he would settle things otherwise, and not suffer our enemies to triumph over us." Thus in our selfishness we blind ourselves to the truth, and act not only unworthily towards God, but inconsistently with our own best faith and hopes. "The tree is known by its fruits." To judge rightly of envy, let us mark its *effects*. See how it wrought in Cain. See how from that time onward, wherever it has had sway, it has wrought terrible evils—as in Saul, and Ahab, and Hsman, and the wicked Jews, and even in the Christian Church. If these things are so, how great a sin do we who profess to be the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus commit by yielding to this mean and degrading vice that has wrought such havoc in the world and in the Church!

II. **THE BLESSEDNESS OF TRUST IN GOD.** Trust is the true antidote to envy. We see this in the *dispositions it produces*—towards God, piety (vers. 3—6); towards man, benevolence (ver. 8). Next in the *benedictions it secures*. It brings *settledness*. Instead of distressing cares and passions, we have tranquillity. Instead of pain, we have peace. We are at home with God. There is also *sustenance*. We are "fed" with heavenly food. We gain strength for all work. "Daily bread" fits us for daily duty. There is also *satisfaction*. Our higher nature is set above our lower nature. Reason rules instead of passion. Love binds us to our brethren instead of our being separated by envy. Trust in God brings to us all that is really good for us, and we bask as in the sunshine of God's favour instead of being alienated from him by wicked works. Mark the Divine order with regard to these blessings. There must be a right spirit before there can be right conduct. Mark also how, as we live a true and unselfish life, doing good and hoping for nothing again but what God the Lord sees fit to give, we secure not only our own self-respect, but grow in favour with God and man. The surest way to get rid of discontent with the present, and fear of the future, is to do right and leave all to God.

"Careless seems the Great Avenger; history's pages but record  
One death-grapple in the darkness, 'twixt old systems and the Word,  
Truth for ever on the scaffold—wrong for ever on the throne.  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."

(Lowell.)

W. F.

Vers. 4—6.—Here we have a *sweet picture of a noble life*. I. **QUIET HEART.** The eye, the ear, the imagination, continually bring before us objects that appeal to our

*desires.* We are in danger of being distracted and harassed, and of even yielding to envy and discontent. The cure is from God. When we come to know him as he is, to believe in him as he has revealed himself in Christ Jesus, we are able to rest in him with confidence, leaving everything to his righteous and loving rule.

**II. RIGHTLY ORDERED LIFE.** There may be life without any rule, or there may be life wrongly directed, or there may be life regulated in a right way, in accordance with God's will and not our own. This last is the true "way." It is when we "commit our way to God" in humble prayer, and holy submission to his will, that light will arise to us, and strength be ministered to us, and real prosperity secured to us. This is not only the best way for ourselves, but also for others. It is in doing God's will that we reach the highest honour and usefulness, and accomplish our true destiny.

**III. BLISSFUL FUTURE.** There is a screen as of night between us and to-morrow. We know not what a day may bring forth. There may come loss of health, of property, of friends. There may come diverse trials and troubles. Or it may be otherwise. Let us be thankful that God has been pleased to conceal from us what it would have been ill for us to know. But God knows all, and we are as sure, as that God lives, that it shall be well with the righteous.—W. F.

**Vers. 27—40.—Evil-doers.** Evil-doers are not truly objects of envy. The more closely we contemplate this, the more clearly do we see their baseness. But it is needful that we should be urged to this salutary duty. Again and again in this psalm is the exhortation addressed to us to consider and judge rightly, to cease from evil and learn to do well. And there are good and weighty reasons given why we should have no part with evil-doers.

**I. THEIR CHARACTER IS ODISIOUS.**

**II. THEIR PROSPERITY IS DELUSIVE.** Images upon image is used to set forth the vanity and worthlessness of all prosperity not founded in righteousness. Reason, observation, and history are appealed to as teaching that sometimes quickly, at other times slowly, sometimes openly, at other times silently and secretly, but always certainly, the end cometh (ver. 38).

**III. THEIR DEVICES ARE DOOMED TO DEFEAT.** We see, on the part of the wicked, malice suggesting, cunning contriving, and energy working out their evil devices, and, on the other hand, God watching and thwarting and overruling for good all their plans. So it was with Joseph's brethren (Acts vii. 9, 10). So it was with Daniel's cruel foes (Dan. vi. 24). So it was with the Jews, whose wicked hands had crucified the Son of God (Acts ii. 23, 24). The day of retribution surely cometh. Not only defeat, but "shame and everlasting contempt," await the wicked.—W. F.

**Vers. 27—34.—Goodness.** We have here—

**I. THAT GOODNESS IS THE TRUE AIM OF LIFE.** The first thing is to have the heart made good, and then all that flow from it, in word and deed, will be good also.

"But such as are good men can give good things."

(Milton.)

**II. THAT GOODNESS IS THE REAL GLORY OF LIFE.** (Vers. 30, 31.) We cannot but admire "wisdom" and "judgment;" but what gives these their sweetest savour and their highest worth is the spirit of goodness that dwells in them. The glory of God is his goodness, and it is in the measure that we are like God in goodness that we are like him in glory. This glory is free to us in Christ Jesus.

**III. THAT GOODNESS IS THE MOST PERMANENT POSSESSION OF LIFE.** Many things stand high for a time that will be brought low; many things are counted worthy amongst men that will yet be proved worthless. There may be wicked men who hold a prominent place in the world, and are for a while the envy of many, whose greatness is after all a delusion and a lie. In the end they will be cut down like a tree, whose glory is for ever abased. But it shall be otherwise with the righteous. Goodness cannot die. It is safe amidst all changes. It stands firm in the tumult and rage of the greatest storm. It emerges purer and brighter than ever from the fires of persecution and the fury of evil men (vers. 39, 40). Goodness lives as an influence in the world after death, triumphs as the power of God in death, and will dwell in the light of God beyond death for ever and ever.—W. F.

**Vers. 1—6.**—*Doubts raised by the Divine providence, and how to meet them.* The difficulty which perplexes the mind of the psalmist here is—How does God judge the wicked, if he allows them to prosper; and how reward the righteous, if they suffer adversity? The answers given are not a consecutive argument. The whole psalm is more like a string of pearls held together only by the string. The thoughts have no joints or links to unite them. The leading thought, repeated in various ways, is not to envy the present prosperity of the wicked, but rather to wait in patient resignation for the just judgments of God.

**I. BURNING ENVY IS WRONG IN ITSELF, AND LEADS TO EVIL CONSEQUENCES.** (Ver. 1.) To grudge the wicked their prosperity is very much as if we coveted it. And envy is nigh to cursing—an unrighteous spirit.

**II. WE MUST ALLOW TIME TO SOLVE THIS AS WELL AS MANY OTHER DIFFICULTIES.** (Ver. 2.) Fate of Saul, Absalom, and Ahithophel. "What thou knowest not now," etc.

**III. LET NOT YOUR DIFFICULTIES SUPPLANT THE ONLY TRULY SATISFYING EXERCISES OF THE HEART AND LIFE.** (Vers. 3, 4.) Trust in the unseen Lord; delight yourself in him; find the joy of his service; and your best desires shall be satisfied. Do not let your jealousy of the wicked cause you to cease from doing good, and unsettle your ways of life; inhabit the land, and live a truthful and faithful life.

**IV. LET THE RIGHTEOUS MAN BE ASSURED OF THE SYMPATHY AND CO-OPERATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS GOD.** (Vers. 5, 6.) God brought David out of all dangers with which Saul threatened him, and made his name to shine over the whole kingdom. Present adversity is often the way to future glory. Think of the darkness that fell upon Christ in his sufferings and death; and yet he was the Sun of Righteousness.—S.

**Vers. 7—11.**—*Confidence in God.* The text of the whole psalm is in the first two verses. We are not to be discouraged in the service of God by the prosperity of the wicked; for it is more apparent than real, and is a short-lived prosperity. At the seventh verse the psalm takes a fresh start from the same key-note.

**I. SILENT TRUST IN GOD, WAITING FOR HIM, IS THE ONLY TRUE SOLUTION OF THE DIFFICULTY.** (Ver. 7.) Do not vainly argue the question; be silent to God, and he will speak by-and-by and explain the difficulties of his providence.

**II. ENVIOUS ANGER THAT THE WICKED ARE BETTER OFF THAN YOU IS SINFUL.** (Ver. 8.) It is an arraignment of God's providence, which is presumptuous, and a discontent which is ungrateful, and an undervaluing of that inward prosperity which is the greatest good of life.

**III. IT IS THE RIGHTEOUS WHO REALLY INHERIT THAT WHICH IS BEST IN THIS LIFE.** (Vers. 9, 10.) The prosperity of evil-doers will soon come to an end; for it is unrighteous, and cannot last in the world of a righteous God. But the righteous have an inward life that turns outward things into gold; they feast royally at the table of God, as is said in the twenty-third psalm.

**IV. THE PRECEDING THOUGHT IS REPEATED WITH THE PROMISE OF AN ABUNDANCE OF PEACE.** (Ver. 11.) Our Lord repeats the former part of this verse in the Sermon on the Mount. "The meek—those who do not vainly strive and fret over the impossible or the inevitable—shall inherit the earth." And shall have peace of heart and mind, which the wicked have not.—S.

**Vers. 12—20.**—*The righteous and the wicked.* The argument is continued and repeated in various forms, that the righteous is to hold fast his confidence in God, and not to be discouraged by the prosperity of the wicked. For—

**I. CONSIDER THE EXPERIENCE OF THE WICKED.** (Vers. 12—15, 20.) 1. *The impotence of the plots which they in their anger devise.* (Vers. 12, 13.) The Lord shall laugh. "No weapon formed against him shall prosper." 2. *The punishment of the wicked is near and certain.* (Vers. 13, 20.) "He seeth that his day is coming." 3. *The weapons which they employ against the righteous shall recoil upon themselves.* (Vers. 14, 15.) God overrules the contest between them.

**II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.** (Vers. 16—19.) 1. *A little with righteousness is worth more than much with wickedness.* (Ver. 16.) 2. *The strength of the righteous is maintained and upheld by God.* (Ver. 17.) While the "arms"—equivalent to the "strength"—of the wicked soon break down. 3. *They fulfil their divinely*

*appointed days, and their goods descend to their posterity.* (Ver. 18.) They are secure, and all things work together for good. The Christian knows of an eternal inheritance.  
**4. God will provide for all their wants.** (Ver. 19.) This we know more abundantly in Christ.—S.

Vers. 23, 24.—*God orders the good life.* “The steps of a good man,” etc.

**I. GOD ORDERS THE LIFE OF A GOOD MAN.** 1. *By means of outward law.* “His delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate day and night.” “But what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh,” etc. Christ is the outward law for the Christian. 2. *By means of an inward influence.* His Spirit exerting, directing, and ruling the thoughts, the desires, and the will, teaching him how to choose and how to walk. He “orders” consistently with our freedom.

**II. GOD TAKES PLEASURE IN THE WAY OF GOOD MEN.** 1. *Because all his work is good.* A good man’s life is his production. All God’s work is good, none evil. 2. *Because he delights in the rectitude and welfare of his children.* As an earthly father delights in the true prosperity of his children.

**III. GOD GIVES EVERY HELP FOR THE RECOVERY OF THOSE WHO FALL.** He upholds him, helps him to rise, by taking hold of his hand. 1. *He promises abundant forgiveness to the repentant.* “Let the wicked forsake his way,” etc. The parable of the prodigal son. 2. *He searches and tries and shows the evil way in men,* and leads them to repentance. By the revealing work of his Spirit. “Like as a father pitieth his children,” etc.—S.

Ver. 37.—*The perfect life.* “Mark the perfect, and behold the upright: for the man of peace hath a future [or, ‘posterity’].” In contrast to the wicked spoken of in the next verse (38). This whole psalm is a record of human experience.

**I. THE STUDY OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE IN THE LIGHT OF HUMAN CHARACTER IS MOST INSTRUCTIVE.** 1. *Every man’s life is in the main an embodiment either of the Law of God or of the law of self.* Intellectual life, a life of knowledge or of ignorance, of wisdom or foolishness. But the moral life is the grandest, as exhibiting obedience or disobedience to the eternal laws of God. 2. *The moral life shows the consequences of living the one life or the other.* The shame and misery of the one, and the peace and blessedness of the other. Difference is life or death.

**II. WHAT THE STUDY OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN’S LIFE REVEALS.** 1. *It brings him internal peace.* And in the main outward peace; but if not, the peace of trust and rest in God. Peace in life and peace in death. 2. *He transmits righteousness to his posterity.* (1) By the influence of his example and teaching. His words and his character are reproduced in his children; he lives again in them, perhaps a higher life than he lived, according to the law of progress. May be exceptions. (2) By hereditary transmission. Moral as well as physical qualities descend to our children, and to children’s children. How grand a motive for a pure, noble, Christian life! Goodness runs in the family blood.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXXVIII.

THIS is the third of the penitential psalms, and is appropriately recited by the Church on Ash Wednesday. Of all the penitential psalms it is the one which shows the deepest marks of utter prostration of heart and spirit under a combination of the severest trials, both mental and bodily. The mind of the writer is racked by a sense of God’s displeasure (vers. 1, 2, etc.), by grief at the desertion of friends (ver. 11), by fear of the

machinations and threats of enemies (vers. 12, 19, 20). His body is smitten with disease, the flesh without soundness, the bones full of aches, the loins agonized with a sense of burning, the heart palpitating, the strength and sight failing (vers. 3—10). And through all there is the feeling that the whole is the result of his own sin (vers. 3—5, 18). Still the writer is not reduced to despair. He clings to God (vers. 1, 9, 15, 21, 22). He accepts his sufferings as a just chastisement. He confesses his iniquity.

and is sorry for his sin. He prays to God (vers. 1, 21); he pours out his complaints to him (ver. 9); he hopes in him (ver. 15); finally, he calls upon him as "his Salvation" (ver. 22).

The psalm is ascribed to David by the title, but is not generally allowed to be his. It is assigned commonly to an unknown sufferer. Still, some modern critics, notably Canon Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' accept the statement of the title, and find the psalm very suitable to the circumstances of David "at the period just preceding the revolt of Absalom." Canon Cook holds that "at that time there are indications that David was prostrate by disease, which gave full scope to the machinations of his son and his abettors." If this were so, the Davidical authorship would certainly be probable; but the absence of any mention of such an illness from the Second Book of Samuel is a difficulty which cannot easily be got over.

The psalm falls into three divisions: From ver. 1 to ver. 8; from ver. 9 to ver. 14; and from ver. 15 to the end. Each part begins with an appeal to God, whereon follows a description of the writer's sufferings. Part iii. both begins and ends with an appeal to God.

Ver. 1.—O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath (comp. Ps. vi. 1, where the first of the penitential psalms begins similarly). The prayer is for the cessation of God's *wrath*, rather than of the "rebuke" which has resulted from it. Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure (see the comment on Ps. vi. 1).

Ver. 2.—For thine arrows stick fast in me. (On the "arrows" of the Almighty, see above, Ps. vii. 13; and comp. Job vi. 4; Psa. xviii. 14; xlv. 5; lxi. 7; lxxvii. 17, etc.) It has been maintained that by "God's arrows" only sickness is meant (Hitzig); but the contrary appears from Deut. xxxii. 23—25. Hengstenberg is right, "The arrows of the Almighty denote all the chastisements of sin depending on God." And thy hand presseth me sore. The verb used is the same in both clauses; but it is difficult to express both ideas by one term in English. Dr. Kay makes the attempt by translating, "For thine arrows have sunk deep in me; yea, thine hand sank heavily on me."

Ver. 3.—There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger. The psalmist

begins with a description of his bodily troubles; and, first of all, declares that there is "no soundness in his flesh," *i.e.* no healthiness, no feeling of vigour, no vital strength. Neither is there any rest in my bones, he says, because of my sin. His bones ache continually, and give him no rest (comp. Psa. vi. 2; xxii. 14; xxxi. 10; xlii. 10; and Job xxx. 17, 30).

Ver. 4.—For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; *i.e.* they overwhelm me like waves of the sea. Together with my bodily pain is mingled mental anguish—a sense of regret and remorse on account of my ill-doing, and a conviction that by my sins I have brought upon me my sufferings. As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. They press me down, crush me to the earth, are more than I can bear.

Ver. 5.—My wounds stink and are corrupt. The writer reverts to his bodily pains. He has "wounds," which "stink" and "are corrupt;" or "fester and become noisome," which may be boils, or bed-sores, and which make him a loathsome object to others (comp. Job ix. 19; xxx. 18). Because of my foolishness. Because I was so foolish as to forsake the way of righteousness, and allow sin to get the dominion over me.

Ver. 6.—I am troubled; literally, *bent*; which some take physically, and explain as "twisted by violent spasms," others, psychically, as "warped in mind," "driven crazy." I am bowed down greatly; *i.e.* bowed to earth, crooked, as men are in extreme old age, or by such maladies as lumbago and rheumatism. I go mourning all the day long. My gait is that of a mourner—I stoop and move slowly.

Ver. 7.—For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease; *my loins are full of burning* (Kay, Revised Version). A burning pain in the lumbar region is apparently intended. And there is no soundness in my flesh. Repeated from ver. 3.

Ver. 8.—I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. In concluding his accounts of his physical condition, the writer passes from details to more vague and general statements. He is "feeble," *i.e.* generally weak and wanting in vigour—he is "sore broken," or "sore bruised" (Revised Version), *i.e.* full of aches and pains, as though he had been bruised all over—and the "disquietness of his heart" causes him to vent his anguish in "roarings," or groanings.

Vers. 9—14.—In this second strophe the physical are subordinated to the moral sufferings; the former being touched on in one verse only (ver. 10), the latter occupying the rest of the section. Of these the



most tangible are the pain caused by the desertion of his "lovers," "friends," and "kinsmen" (ver. 11), and the alarm arising from the action taken, simultaneously, by his ill wishers and adversaries (ver. 12). These afflictions have reduced him to a condition of silence—almost of apathy, such as is described in vers. 13, 14.

Ver. 9.—Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee. This has been called "the first indication of hope in this psalm;" but there is a gleam of hope in the prayer of ver. 1. Hope, however, does here show itself more plainly than before. The psalmist has laid "all his desire" before God, and feels that God is weighing and considering it. He has also opened to him "all his groanings"—uttered freely all his complaint. This he could have been led to do only from a conviction that God was not irrevocably offended with him, but might, by repentance, confession, and earnest striving after amendment (ver. 20), be reconciled, and induced to become his Defence (ver. 15) and his Salvation (ver. 22).

Ver. 10.—My heart panteth. This verse, which reverts to the bodily sufferings, seems a little out of place. But Hebrew poetry is not logical, and cares little for exact arrangement. Three more bodily troubles are noticed, of which this is the first—the heart "panta," i.e. throbs, or palpitates violently. My strength faileth me. The strength suddenly fails. As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. The sight swims, and is swallowed up in darkness (comp. Job xvii. 7).

Ver. 11.—My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; or, *from my stroke* (comp. Ps. xxxix. 10, where the same word is used). The psalmist feels himself to be "stricken, smitten of God" (Isa. liii. 4). He looks for comfort and sympathy to his friends, but they, with a selfishness that is only too common, hold aloof, draw away from him, and desert him (comp. Job xix. 13, 14). And my kinsmen stand afar off; or, *my neighbours*. The stricken deer is forsaken by the rest of the herd (comp. Matt. xxvi. 56, 58).

Ver. 12.—They also that seek after my life lay snares for me. To the desertion of friends is added the persecution of enemies, who take advantage of the debility and prostration caused by sickness to plot against the writer's life, to "lay snares for him," and devise evil against him. Those who assign the psalm to David suppose the devices described in 2 Sam. xv. 1—6 to be referred to. And they that seek my

hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long; literally, *speak malignity*; i.e. calumniate me—bring false accusations against me (comp. 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8).

Ver. 13.—But I, as a deaf man, heard not. I took no notice, i.e. I made as if I was deaf. And I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. So far this psalmist, whether David or another, was a type of Christ (see Isa. liii. 7; Matt. xxvi. 63; xxvii. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 23).

Ver. 14.—Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs; i.e. I was like a man who is unable to answer, to reprove, or rebuke an adversary. So great was my self-restraint.

Ver. 15.—For in thee, O Lord, do I hope. Thus I acted, because my hope was in thee. I looked for thy interposition. I knew that thou wouldst "maintain my right, and my cause" (Ps. ix. 4) in thine own good time and in thine own good way. I said to myself in my heart, Thou wilt hear—or rather, *thou wilt answer* (Revised Version)—O Lord my God; and I was content to leave my defence to thee.

Ver. 16.—For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me; rather, *for I said, I will be silent, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me*. I feared lest by answering rashly or intemperately I might give my enemies occasion against me. I knew by experience that, when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. They are always on the watch to catch at any slip on my part, and make it a ground for magnifying themselves and denying me. Hence my silence.

Ver. 17.—For I am ready to halt. I am weak and helpless, liable at any moment to stumble and fall. And my sorrow is continually before me; i.e. my sin, which I sorrow over, which lies at the root of all my distress (comp. Ps. li. 3).

Ver. 18.—For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. The four "fors," beginning four consecutive verses, are somewhat puzzling. Canon Cook suggests that they introduce four reasons for the psalmist's silence (vers. 13, 14) and abstinence from self-justification: (1) because God hears him, and will make answer for him (ver. 15); (2) because, if he spoke, he might give further occasion to his enemies (ver. 16); (3) because he feels in danger, and is conscious of sin (ver. 17); and (4) because he has no course open to him but confession and contrition. If we are justified in attributing the psalm to David, and in assigning its composition to the period immediately preceding Absalom's rebellion, we must look upon it as opening to us

a view of David's condition of mind at that time which is of great interest.

Ver. 19.—But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong. The psalmist goes back to the thought of his enemies, to whom he has made no answer, and whom he has not ventured to rebuke (vers 13, 14). He remembers that they are full of life and strength; he calls to mind the fact that they are many in number; he puts on record the cause of their enmity, which is not his sin, but his earnest endeavour to forsake his sin and follow after righteousness (ver. 20); and then, in conclusion, he makes a direct appeal to God for aid against them—first negatively (ver. 21), and then positively in the final outburst, “Make haste to help me, O Lord my Salvation” (ver. 22). And they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. This suits well the time of Absalom's conspiracy, when day by day more and more of the people forsook

David and joined the party of his sor (2 Sam. xv. 12, 13).

Ver. 20.—They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries (comp. Ps. xxxv. 12). Because I follow the thing that good is; literally, *because I follow good*.

Ver. 21.—Forsake me not, O Lord (comp. Ps. xxvii. 9; lxxi. 9, 18; cxix. 8). God never really forsakes his saints (Ps. xxxvii. 28). He withdraws sometimes for wise purposes the sense of his presence and favour, so that they feel as if they were forsaken; but this is only temporary. O my God, be not far from me (comp. Ps. xxii. 19; xxxv. 22; lxxi. 12).

Ver. 22.—Make haste to help me, O Lord my Salvation (see Ps. xxii. 19; xxxi. 2; xl. 13; lxx. 1; lxxi. 12, etc.). This so frequent cry always shows imminent peril; or at any rate, a belief in it. The writer here was in danger doubly—from disease and from his enemies. Thus he might well cry out.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 4.—*Conviction of sin an element of true Christian life.* “As a heavy burden.” Jonah, when carried down in his living tomb to “the roots of the mountains,” with the sea-weeds about his head, was not plunged in a deeper sea of trouble than David in the experience this psalm records (comp. Ps. xxxii. 3—5). He felt that his troubles were the just and wise chastisement of his sins; and they lead him to confession (ver. 18). He humbly bows under God's hand; but only prays that he may feel that chastisement is not in wrath, but in mercy (ver. 1; cf. Heb. xii. 5, etc.). These words supply a starting-point for some remarks on *conviction of sin as an element in true Christian life*.

I. CONVICTION OF SIN—*q.d.* sorrowful sense of blameworthiness before God—SPRINGS FROM A TRIPLE ROOT: (1) an awakened and enlightened conscience; (2) definite memory of particular sins; (3) clear and affecting views of holiness. 1. The natural effect of persistent sin is to deaden conscience (Eph. v. 19). Conscience may be awake, but completely perverted by ignorance or false belief; *e.g.* the heathen mother flinging her infant into the Ganges (Acts xxvi. 9). When the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the mind, and applies the truth to the heart, sin is seen and felt to be “exceeding sinful” (Rom. vii. 7—13). Hence to a tender, rightly informed conscience, things appear sinful in which an ungodly heart discerns no harm. 2. We sin in many other ways than in deliberate acts of conscious transgression. We “leave undone what we ought to do;” fail in intention, in mixed unworthy motives, even when our action is good; selfishness, cowardice, sloth, unfaithfulness; falling (how far!) short of the Divine standard—love to God *with all the heart, mind, soul, strength*, and to our neighbour as *ourselves*. We may know all this, confess it, seek pardon; but it does not oppress and burden conscience like some definite act of sin—perhaps long past—which stands out with frightful clearness in the memory (Ps. li. 3). 3. The measure of the sinfulness of sin is its opposition to holiness. The Bible standard of holiness is God's character revealed to us, above all, in Christ (1 Pet. i. 15, 16). Therefore our view of our own sinfulness will depend on our clear and affecting apprehension of God's holiness. The robe that looks white in dim light will betray all its spots and stains in midday sunshine.

II. EXPERIENCE GREATLY VARIES, EVEN IN REAL CHRISTIANS, REGARDING CONVICTION OF SIN. With some, overwhelming; with others, consciously deficient. This may arise from either of the sources spoken of, or a combination—tenderness or dulness of conscience, remembrance of particular sins, closeness of converse with God, and deep

and lofty views of holiness. Some Christians may be *patterns*, but none are *models*, for others.

III. DIM, FEEBLE SENSE OF SIN AND OF ITS EVIL SEEMS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHRISTIANITY OF TO-DAY. There is a great advance in prevailing views and teaching regarding Divine love; but no corresponding advance regarding Divine righteousness and holiness. This tends to enfeeble Christian life and work. Nothing is more dangerous than the use of exaggerated language to express our inner life. Let no Christian for whom they would be exaggerated and unreal adopt the words of the text. But let us seek a quickened conscience, a faithful self-knowledge, above all, nearness to God, that we may see all sin, and our own, in the light both of his holiness and of his love.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Sin stinging like an adder.* This has been called one of the penitential psalms. It may be called so without any severe strain of language; and yet its penitential tone is very far removed from that of either the thirty-second or the fifty-first psalm. There is little doubt that there is a sincere acknowledgment of the sin; but here the main stress of the grief seems to be attributable rather to the *suffering consequent* upon the sin, than to the guilt of the sin itself. And we cannot resist the conviction that an undue reticence (which, alas! often results in an infrequent and inadequate warning against sins of the flesh) has somewhat warped and fettered the remarks of many expositors. For the physical suffering which is here detailed with distressing precision, points to sin as the cause thereof—to *that* sin which is one of the seriously poisoning influences in our social fabric, and against which no pleadings can be too tender, and no warnings can be too loud. Let us first study the case, and then utilize it.

I. THE CASE STATED. Even before entering into detail, it is obvious that the case is one of intense suffering. The details, however, will show us but too clearly what the suffering was, and how it was accounted for. 1. *There had been the commission of sin.* Vers. 3—5 give us three terms—"sin," "foolishness," "iniquity." The sin was one which brought about a great deal of: 2. *Bodily disorder.* Note the following expressions: (1) "My flesh" (ver. 3). (2) "My bones" (ver. 3). (3) "My loins" (ver. 7). (4) "No soundness" (ver. 3). (5) "No health" (ver. 3). (6) "Wounds" (ver. 5). (7) "Ulcers" (ver. 5, Hebrew). (8) "Offensive" (ver. 5). (9) "Burning" (ver. 7). (10) This alternating with deathly coldness (ver. 8). (11) "Palpitation" (ver. 10). (12) The frame bent and bowed with the suffering (ver. 6). (13) "Failing strength" (ver. 10). (14) "Dimness of sight" (ver. 10).<sup>1</sup> Surely this puts before us, in no obscure fashion, the terrible physical woe which the writer was enduring. 3. *Great mental anguish.* (1) God's arrows struck very deeply into his soul (ver. 2). (2) God's hand pressed heavily upon him (ver. 2). (3) He went abroad as a mourner (ver. 6). (4) He roared—groaned aloud—all the day long. It may not be always possible to affirm that such and such suffering is the effect of this or that specific sin. But sometimes we can. And it is no wonder if sins of the flesh bring fleshly suffering. It is an ordained law of God that it should be so. Hence the sufferings are rightly regarded as "the arrows of God." 4. *In his trouble, lovers and friends stand aloof from him.* Even neighbours and kinsmen drew themselves afar off (ver. 11). Earthly friends are like swallows, who come near in fine weather, and fly away ere the weather turns foul. 5. *He was laden with reproach, and even beset with snares.* (Ver. 12.) 6. *He did not and could not reply.* To the charges laid at his door he had no justifications to offer, and therefore said nothing (cf. ver. 14, Hebrew). This was so far wise. 7. *Though silent to man, he pours out his heart to God.* He calls God his God; even though guilt lies heavily on the soul. (1) He declares the whole case before the mercy-seat (ver. 9). (2) He confesses the sin (ver. 18). (3) He deprecates the Divine displeasure (ver. 1). (4) He appeals for help (ver. 22). Note: There is a great difference between men who "are overtaken in a fault," and those whose life is one

<sup>1</sup> Perowne's notes on the several terms are helpful; as also are Kirkpatrick's. Fausset's remarks on this psalm, in his 'Horæ Psalmicæ' (pp. 56, 57, 144), shed helpful light upon it.

perpetual sin of alienation from God. David lived in an age when lustfulness was scarcely recognized as wrong at all, save where the holy Law of God had gleamed on it with the searching light of Heaven. If David fell into this sin, it was because he was injured by the low conventional standard of his day. If he regarded it *as* sin, and mourned over it, it was because he was under the educating influence of that Word which was as "a lamp to his feet, and a light unto his path." 8. *While David means his sin as threatening him with destruction and ruin, he looks for salvation in God and God alone.* (Ver. 22.) "O Lord my Salvation."

II. THE CASE UTILIZED. Here is evidently a psalm which is one of a number that contain a rehearsal of the writer's private experience. They profess to be that, and therefore, unless some good reason to the contrary is shown, we rightly assume that they are that. The expositor who desires to deal faithfully with *all* the psalms, and with the whole of each psalm, will often find himself between two opposite schools. On one side, there are those who would enclose every psalm within the limits of a naturalistic psychology; while there are others who seem to regard every psalm as referring directly or indirectly to Christ.<sup>1</sup> But while the second and forty-fifth psalms can by no means be accounted for by a rationalistic psychology, so this thirty-eighth psalm can by no means be applied to the Messiah directly or indirectly. Let us not select facts to fit a theory; but study *all* the facts, and frame the theory accordingly. In this personal moan and groan we have: 1. *Suffering following on sin.* Of what kind the sin was there can be little question. And if we wonder that David could fall into such sin, we may well ask—What can be expected of a man who had six wives (2 Sam. iii. 2—5)? The Law of God might, indeed, be the rule of his life, but he was injured and corrupted by falling into the conventionalisms of his day; and hence in his private life he came far short of his own professed ideal. Is not the like incongruity between the ideal and the actual often seen even now? 2. *If it was owing to "conformity to the world" that David thus sinned, it was because he had before him God's revelation of the evil of sin that he was so bowed down under a sense of the guilt thereof.* The revealed Law of God stood high above the level to which he had attained; hence a shame and self-loathing on account of sin, which would nowhere else have been known. 3. *Smarting under the sense of guilt, David yet tells God all.* He knew God to be one "pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin;" and hence the burdens of sin and guilt, as well as of care, were laid before the mercy-seat (Ps. xxii. 5). 4. *At times, however, words fail; then the desire and the groaning are perfectly understood.* (Ver. 9.) Who does not understand something of this that knows anything of the "energies of prayer"? There are "groanings which cannot be uttered." As there are "songs without words," so are there "prayers without words." For the grief consequent upon sin may be, and often is, aggravated by the desertion of those friends who will smile on us when we are prosperous, and will turn their backs on us when adversity comes. But, even so, it is an infinite mercy to be *shut up* to God, and to let the heart lie "naked and opened" before One who will never misunderstand, and who will never forsake us. 5. *For our God is "Jehovah our Salvation."* That is his revealed name, and to it he will ever be true. See how gloriously "the sure mercies of David" are set forth in Ps. lxxxix. 26—33. God is "a just God, and a Saviour" (Isa. xlv. 21). Hence we should never let our consciousness of guilt drive us from him; rather should it always make us "flee unto" him "to hide us." 6. *Hence only those who have the light of God's revelation can possibly have any gospel for men smarting under the guilt of sin.* We do not know any one passage in Scripture in which the combination is more remarkable of a man whose sin has brought deepest shame and agony upon him, and who yet is laying hold of God under that beautiful, that matchless name, "my Salvation" (ver. 22). Very often, indeed, the word "salvation" in the Old Testament means mainly, if not exclusively, temporal deliverance. Here, at any rate, it cannot be so limited; for the salvation required to meet the case of woe thus laid before God must be one which includes cancelling guilt,

<sup>1</sup> On one side are such as Wellhausen and Cheyne; on the other, such as Horne and Alexander. If, however, such a psalm as this makes the *extreme* Messianic theory obviously untenable, on the other hand, there are facts enough adduced, twenty times over, in Bishop Alexander's Bampton Lectures, to show that the naturalistic psychological theory cannot stand for a moment. Why cannot we let *each psalm speak for itself*?

purifying from corruption, and healing disease. And that revelation of God as our Salvation which was made in germ to the Hebrews, is disclosed more fully to us under Christ. He is "made wisdom from God unto us, even righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that (according as it is written) he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. i. 30, 31). In the very volume where sin is dealt with most seriously, it is also treated most hopefully; and the very revelation which cries with trumpet-power, "All have sinned," also cries, "Look unto me, and be ye saved."—C.

Vers. 1—22.—*Thoughts in affliction.* The preacher saith, "In the day of adversity consider" (Eccles. vii. 14). We should "call to remembrance"—

I. THE HAND OF GOD IN AFFLICTION. Our afflictions may be various, and have various causes. But we should look higher than mere human instrumentality, or the action of natural laws. We should acknowledge the hand of God (ver. 2). What a change this makes! It soothes our resentments. It calms our fears. God sees all. He knows how we suffer. He who has stricken us can heal our wounds. He who has "pressed us sore" is able to pour joy into our hearts.

II. THE CONNECTION OF SIN WITH AFFLICTION. If there is suffering, there must have been sin. We may not be able to trace the connection; and we may greatly err and wound others cruelly if we say that certain sufferings are the result of certain sins. But, while we are not to judge others, we should judge ourselves. Our sufferings ought to bring our sins to remembrance. And the more strictly we scan our lives, and the more severely we search our hearts, the more will our sins increase, till their pressure and weight become intolerable, and we cry out, "They are too heavy for me" (ver. 4).

III. THE INADEQUACY OF ALL HUMAN AID IN AFFLICTION. Affliction is a great revealer. It not only shows us much as to ourselves, but also as to others. It proves who are true and who are false; who are worthy and who are unworthy; who may be trusted to stand by us, and who will wax cold and forsake us, "having loved this present world." Job bitterly complained of his friends: "Miserable comforters are ye all." The psalmist was still more sorely tried: "My lovers and friends stand aloof from my sore" (ver. 11). Even when true and willing, our friends can do but little for us in our greatest straits. Counsel is good. Sympathy is better. Generous aid is better still. But the best of all, the only help that goes to the root of the matter, is when some true friend, like Jonathan, "strengthens our hands in God."

IV. THE DIVINE RESOURCES OF THE GODLY IN AFFLICTION. There is prayer. The disciples in trouble came to Jesus and told him all. So we may pour out all our heart to God (ver. 9). There is *confession*. It is a marvellous relief to bring our sins to God (ver. 18). The burden that is too heavy for us will fall off when we cast ourselves as humble penitents at the foot of the cross. There is *renewed consecration*. Whatever comes, we must hold fast to our hope. Every danger and strait, every great fear that pales the face and makes the heart grow faint, should lead us to the renewal of our vows, and the reinvigoration of our purpose to "follow only what is good" (ver. 20). Above all, there is *refuge in God*. From the beginning, and all through, the psalmist is with God, confessing, pleading, appealing; and in the end he gathers up all the desire of his heart in the earnest cry, "Forsake me not, O Lord! O my God, be not far from me!" "Make haste to help me, O Lord my Salvation!" (vers. 21, 22). Thus he found comfort; and so may we also. Jerome said, "If any sickness happen to the body, we are to seek for the medicine of the soul;" and the true and only Physician of the soul is Christ.—W. F.

Vers. 1—22.—*A fearful picture of the sufferings which a great sin can cause.* Supposed to be one of David's penitential psalms.

I. COMPLICATED MENTAL AND BODILY SUFFERING. (Vers. 1—8.) 1. *Dread of God's further anger.* Guilt makes a man full of fear and apprehension (ver. 1). 2. *His sin was realized as an intolerable burden.* (Ver. 4.) A load that he was unable to carry; or a great wave passing over his head and threatening to overwhelm him. 3. *His sin was an enfeebling and disquieting sorrow.* (Vers. 6, 8.) Continual, unintermittent, that made life one lasting agony. 4. *Mental suffering brought on great bodily suffering and prostration.* Body and mind react upon each other when any great trouble comes upon us; and we are reduced to the deepest pitch of misery.

II. HE IS PUNISHED BY MEN AS WELL AS BY GOD. (Vers. 9—14.) 1. *His friends are alienated, and refuse him any comfort.* (Vers. 10, 11.) When we feel forsaken of God and man, then our cup of agony is full. This was our Lord's experience at the Crucifixion. 2. *His enemies also seek to give him his death-blow.* (Vers. 12, 19, 20.) They endeavour to take advantage of his fall to ruin him and take his life. How bad men "rejoice in the iniquity" of the righteous! 3. *Conscious of sin, he is obliged to be silent.* (Vers. 13, 14.) Consciousness of guilt makes him unable to refute the false charges of his enemies. Of what avail is it to speak when we are deeply self-condemned? This is an aggravation of our punishment, when we cannot defend ourselves before our foes.

III. HE RENOUNCES ALL SELF-HELP TO HOPE IN GOD. (Vers. 15—22.) 1. *If God did not hear him, his enemies would rejoice over him.* For he himself was so weak that he had no strength to contend with them (vers. 16, 17). 2. *He will earnestly repent and confess his sin.* (Ver. 18.) This is our only way of restoration to the favour of God or man. Repentance is the earnest turning away from the sin with sincere loathing of mind. 3. *An imploring cry for speedy rescue.* (Vers. 21, 22.) When we feel as on the brink of death, we do not think of "God's time;" we are impatient for deliverance, and we cry for present help in our time of trouble.

LESSON. Think into what straits and suffering a man's sins have power to bring him, and what his opportunity of salvation is in Christ.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XXXIX.

THE psalmist, vexed and disgusted with life, feeling a desire to murmur and complain, but aware that his words are watched, and his wicked enemies ready to make use of them against him, has resolved on maintaining an entire silence—at any rate, while the ungodly are in his sight (vers. 1, 2), but is unable to keep to his resolve. Despite himself, he bursts out into speech—a speech of bitter complaint (vers. 4—6). "How long has he got to endure this life so unsatisfactory, so full of vanity?" The outburst relieves him, and he continues in a gentler strain, recognizing God's hand in the griefs and woes of life, entreating his help, and finally asking to be spared a little, that he may recover strength, before he goes hence and is no more (vers. 7—13).

The title assigns the psalm to David, and represents him as having committed the composition for musical arrangement to the precentor, or choir-master, of the time, who is then named as Jeduthun, one of the chief musicians in David's service (1 Chron. xvi. 41, 42; xxv. 3—6). There is no reason to dispute this attribution. The poetic beauty of the composition is great, and the circumstances are such as suit David's early life.

The pause-sign, "Selah," divides the psalm into three portions: (I) from ver. 1

to ver. 5; (2) from ver. 6 to ver. 11; and (3) from ver. 12 to the end.

Ver. 1.—I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. There are no grounds for connecting this silence with the abstinence from self-vindication mentioned in the preceding psalm (vers. 13, 14). Indeed, it seems to have had a wholly different origin (see the introductory paragraph). I will keep my mouth with a bridle; i.e. "curb my impatience, restrain and keep in my speech." While the wicked is before me. The Prayer-book Version is better, if less literal, "While the ungodly is in my sight."

Ver. 2.—I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good. Some explain, "I held my peace, but it did me no good—I was none the better for it" (Hupfeld, Hengstenberg, Canon Cook); others adopt the Prayer-book Version, "I kept silence even from good words" (Kay, Alexander, Revised Version). And my sorrow was stirred. The pain at my heart was not quieted thereby, nor even lessened; rather, it was roused up, quickened, and aggravated. This is the natural result of repressing any strong feeling.

Ver. 3.—My heart was hot within me; or, grew hot (Kay). And while I was musing the fire burned; or, kindled (Revised Version). Then spake I with my tongue; i.e. aloud, articulately. I could not—at any rate, I did not—restrain myself. I burst out in speech, and made my moan to God.

Ver. 4.—Lord, make me to know mine end, and the number of my days. This is

not exactly the request of Job, who desired to be at once cut off (Job vi. 9; vii. 15; xiv. 13), but it is a request conceived in the same spirit. The psalmist is weary of life, expects nothing from it, feels that it is "altogether vanity." He asks, therefore, not exactly for death, but that it may be told him how long he will have to endure the wretched life that he is leading. He anticipates no relief except in death, and feels, at any rate for the time, that he would welcome death as a deliverer. That I may know how frail I am. So meet moderna; but Hengstenberg denies that *למ* can ever mean "frail," and falls back upon the old rendering, "that I may know when I shall cease [to be]," which certainly gives a very good sense.

Ver. 5.—Behold, thou hast made my days as a handbreadth. It seems inconsistent that one who professes to be weary of his life should then complain of life's shortness. But such inconsistency is human. Job does the same (Job xiv. 1, 2). And mine age is as nothing before thee. The short human existence can scarcely be regarded by God as existence at all; rather, it is mere nothingness. Verily every man living at his best state is but vanity. So our Revisers. But most moderna translate, "Verily every man living was ordained for utter vanity" (comp. Ps. lxii. 9; cxliv. 4).

Ver. 6.—Surely every man walketh in a vain show; literally, *in an image*, or "as an image;" i.e. with a mere semblance of life, but without the reality. Surely they are disquieted in vain. Their restless strivings are to no end, have no result. He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them (comp. Job xxvii. 16, 17; Eccles. ii. 18, 21).

Ver. 7.—And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee. And now—under these circumstances—human life being what it is, and all men nothing but vanity, what is my hope? what is my expectation? what am I waiting for? A cry, as it would seem, of utter despair. But when the night is darkest, day dawns. "Out of the depths" comes forth the voice of faith—"My hope is in THEE!" There is always hope in God. When our father and mother forsake us, the Lord taketh us up. He will not leave us nor forsake us. So the psalmist ends his complaint by throwing himself into the arms of the Divine mercy, and unreservedly submitting himself to God's will.

Ver. 8.—Deliver me from all my transgressions. The approach to God quickens in every God-fearing man the sense of sin and the longing for pardon. So the psalmist has no sooner thrown himself upon God as his one Hope, than the thought of his sin

occurs to him—the sin which has brought upon him all his misery; and his first prayer is to be "delivered" from it. Make me not the reproach of the foolish. So long as his afflictions continued, the psalmist would be an object of scorn to the fool and the ungodly. He prays, therefore, secondly, that the punishment of his sin may cease.

Ver. 9.—I was dumb, I opened not my mouth (comp. vers. 1, 2). Because thou didst it. The knowledge that my afflictions came from thee, and were the just punishment of my transgressions, helped me to keep the silence which I observed while the ungodly was in my sight.

Ver. 10.—Remove thy stroke away from me (comp. Ps. xxxviii. 11). I am consumed by the blow of thine hand; literally, *by the quarrel of thine hand*. But our version gives the true meaning. The "quarrel" has led the "hand" to deal the "stroke" by which the sufferer is "consumed" or "wasted away" (Kay).

Ver. 11.—When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity. The calamities which God sends on a man are of the nature of "rebukes" addressed to his spirit. They are intended to teach, instruct, warn, deter from evil-doing (see Job xxxvi. 8—10). Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth; or, "thou dost consume, as by a moth, what he prizes;" i.e. his health, his strength, "all wherein he has joy and satisfaction" (Hengstenberg). As a moth corrodes a beautiful garment, so does thy displeasure and heavy hand pressing on him corrode and destroy all which constituted his delight and glory. Surely every man is vanity (comp. ver. 5 *ad fin.*). This has become a sort of refrain, terminating the second as well as the first part of the psalm (comp. Ps. cvii. 8, 15, 21, 31; Eccles. ii. 1, 11, 15, 19, 21, 23, 26; Isa. ix. 12, 17, 21).

Ver. 12.—Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears. Tears appeal to the Divine pity in an especial way. "Weep not!" said our Lord to the widow woman at Nain; and to Mary Magdalene, "Why weepest thou?" He himself "offered up his supplications with strong crying and tears" (Heb. v. 7); and so his faithful servants (Job xvi. 20; Ps. vi. 6; xlii. 3; lvi. 8; Isa. xvi. 9; xxxviii. 3; Jer. xv. 17; Lam. ii. 11; Luke vii. 38; Acts xx. 19). Hezekiah's tears especially moved God to pity him (2 Kings xx. 5). For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner. "Here we have no continuing city" (Heb. xiii. 14), but are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13). Hence, being so weak and dependent, we may the more confidently claim God's pity. As all my fathers were (comp. Lev. xxv. 23, "The

land is *mine*; ye are *strangers and sojourners with me*").

Ver. 13.—O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more. The psalmist, no longer anxious for death, but still expecting it, requests of God, in conclusion, a breathing-space, a short time

of refreshment and rest, before he is called on to leave the earth and "be no more;" i.e. bring his present state of existence to an end. Nothing is to be gathered from the expression used as to his expectation or non-expectation of a future life.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 4.—*A wise prayer.* "Lord, make me to know mine end," etc. The writer of this most beautiful, though most sorrowful, psalm opens to us his inmost heart. The inspiring Spirit speaks through one of like passions with ourselves. His own sorrows had taught him sympathy. Looking at human life, he seems to see one vast funeral procession, in which business and pleasure seem alike vain. Yet he shrinks from uttering his pent-up feelings, lest he appear to the ungodly to be blaming God. So he turns to God and pours out his grief in prayer.

I. THIS SEEMS AN UNNECESSARY PRAYER—AT LEAST AT FIRST SIGHT. If any truth is obvious, it is this—of the brevity and frailty of life. Brief at longest (Ps. xc. 10), especially if we reckon the time spent in sleep or dissipated in numberless trifles (ver. 5); frail, ever carrying within it the germs of decay and dissolution. Utterly uncertain—the strongest life may in a moment snap like a thread or be torn like a tree from its root. Who knows not all this?

II. YET IT IS A VERY NEEDFUL AND WISE PRAYER. For there is no truth so obvious and certain which men take so little to heart. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." The picture Charles Dickens has drawn of the lawyer who is for ever harping on the duty of making your will in health, and who dies intestate, is very true to human nature. The psalmist's prayer is not for everybody else, but for himself—"Teach me . . . my days." How account for this blind insensibility of men to the certainty of the future—this "walking in a vain show"? It seems unaccountable, yet so ingrained, nothing less than Divine teaching will cure it.

III. THE TEACHING HERE PRAYED FOR IS NOT TO INFORM US OF THE FACT, WHICH EVERYBODY KNOWS—AND FORGETS, BUT TO ENABLE US TO LEARN ITS LESSONS. Not mere knowledge, but wisdom. 1. Do not anchor your hope on a life so frail, or store your treasure in a world you may leave to-morrow—must leave soon (ver. 6; Matt. vi. 19—21). 2. Do not leave to-day's work to be done to-morrow. A certain eminent statesman is said to have made it a rule to "do nothing to-day which you can put off till to-morrow." This has two great disadvantages: (1) To-morrow will have its own burden, without being double-weighted. (2) You may not be here to-morrow to do it (John ix. 4). 3. Cast the care of the unknown future on God. The frailest thread of life cannot break in his hand unless he wills (Matt. x. 22—31; vi. 30). 4. Live as pilgrims, "like unto men who wait for their Lord" (ver. 12). If you are a believer in Jesus, a child of God by faith, then the keys of life and death are in the hands once nailed for you to the cross, of which he says, "Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" (John x. 28). Death will but come as his messenger. Learn to look full in the dark angel's face and smile, and you will see an answering smile (Heb. xiii. 14; 2 Cor. v. 1, 8).

Ver. 7.—*God, the Refuge of the soul.* "My hope is in thee." This is the single note of joy the psalmist strikes from his harp amid its mournful music—like a ray of sunshine from a stormy sky. From his own private sorrow, from his wide survey of the troubles of human life, he takes refuge in God.

I. A HOPE OF PRESENT HELP, IMMEDIATE DELIVERANCE. (Ver. 13.) He is a *stranger and a sojourner* with God (Lev. xxv. 23); but he hopes the brief remainder of his pilgrimage will be divinely led, even as his fathers had the manna, the water from the rock, the pillar of cloud and fire, in the desert. Hope in God is not a far-away hope, but looks to him as "a very present Help" (Ps. xlv. 1; John xiv. 18).

II. A HOPE THAT LOOKS BEYOND THIS LIFE, FOR GOD IS THE EVER-LIVING. (John xiv. 19.) If hope in God stopped short at the grave, the transient gleam would make



the darkness but more terrible (1 Cor. xv. 19; comp. Heb. xi. 13—16). Wonderful pleasure seems taken by critics and commentators in casting doubt on the knowledge or hope of a future life among God's ancient people. *How could they be ignorant of what formed the basis of Egypt's religion and wisdom, on the one hand, and was no less believed, on the other, by the Greeks, Assyrians, Babylonians, etc.?* King Saul was no saint, but certainly he fully believed that the spirit of Samuel existed after death (1 Sam. xxviii. 11).

III. THIS HOPE RESTS WITH CERTAINTY ONLY ON GOD. This is our Lord's argument against the Sadducees, to prove that the Old Testament Scriptures do teach immortality (Matt. xxii. 31, 32). Immortality apart from God would be no glorious hope, but the most appalling of our terrors.

IV. THIS BLESSED HOPE—to those ancient believers matter of sheer faith—RESTS FOR CHRISTIANS ON AN IMMOVABLE DOUBLE FOUNDATION—the resurrection of Christ, which is an actual physical demonstration of life beyond death; and the promises of Christ, which bind our lives personally to his (2 Tim. i. 10; 1 Pet. i. 3; John xiv. 1—3). No wonder if the faith of the ancient saints sometimes wavered; but ours should be as strong as its foundation (2 Tim. i. 12).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*Unburdening the heart to God in a time of sore affliction, when nothing can be said to man.* Jeduthun, whose name stands at the head of Ps. xxxix., lxii., and lxxvii., was one of a musical family entrusted with the conduct of the musical service in the time of David. The psalms having his name at the head were probably intended to be sung by his choir.<sup>1</sup> It would thus seem that in the Hebrew service of sacred song the prayers and complaints of the individual believer were included, when set to music. If so, the "service of song in the house of the Lord" covered a much wider ground than is usually supposed, and was made to include not only direct address to God, whether of prayer or praise, but also the rehearsal of personal experience; and thus a holy fellowship of song would arise, anticipating long ages before, the expression of the apostle, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs;" only it should be noted that these would be musical utterances of an actual experience going on then and there. It does not follow that the like utterances would be suitable for the service of song now. Discretion and discrimination are needed in the use thereof. This is evidently an individual psalm; it is neither national, prophetic, nor Messianic;<sup>2</sup> it is one of those which reflect the care and anxiety with which David was bowed down at one crisis of his life, though to which of his numerous crises it refers it is not easy to decide.<sup>3</sup> Nor, indeed, is that of moment. It will profit us more to note the course taken by the psalmist at a time of crushing sorrow, and then to see how far the course which he took may be a guide for us under like circumstances.

I. LET US NOTE THE COURSE ADOPTED BY THE PSALMIST AT A TIME OF CRUSHING SORROW. There is a somewhat wide divergence among expositors in their estimate of this psalm, and of the mental revelations therein contained.<sup>4</sup> But we feel bound to look at the psalmist's words tenderly rather than harshly, knowing as we do, how often, in agonies of soul, the best men may utter words which would not escape them in their calmer hours (cf. Ps. cxvi. 11). 1. *Here is a case of sore affliction.* "Thy stroke" (ver. 10); "the blow of thine hand" (ver. 10). Whatever the sorrow may have been to which reference is made, it is regarded as coming directly from God. "Thou didst it" (ver. 9). It was so heavy that David was "consumed" thereby (ver. 10). And

<sup>1</sup> See an interesting article on Jeduthun, by Lord Arthur Hervey, in Smith's 'Bibl. Dict.'

<sup>2</sup> See Perowue's introduction to this psalm.

<sup>3</sup> See Fausset hereon; and Edersheim's 'Bible History,' vol. v. p. 16 (R.T.S.).

<sup>4</sup> Calvin, Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Lange, may all be consulted with advantage. Archbishop Leighton's expository lectures on this psalm are deserving of careful perusal. Many of his words are golden. On the word "selah," at the end of vers. 5 and 11, see Mr. Wright's article in Smith's 'Bibl. Dict.,' and an instructive and suggestive article by Edmund Layfielde, quoted in Spurgeon's 'Treasury of David,' vol. ii. p. 249, *et seq.*

it was looked on by him as a chastisement for his transgressions (cf. vers. 8, 11). 2. *It is, under such circumstances, very hard to be absolutely still.* So the first verse implies. There is little indication that the disturbing trouble arose (as some suggest) from seeing the prosperity of the wicked; but evidently there is some distinctively personal trouble, probably sickness and weakness, which, with all the public demands made upon him, weighs heavily upon his soul, and he is tempted to complain and to seek sympathy from without. But: 3. *He is in the midst of uncongenial souls.* (Ver. 1.) "The wicked is before me." Note: Earthly men are poor companions in the distresses of spiritual men. To the natural man the sorrows of a spiritual man would be altogether unintelligible. And supposing that the troubles here referred to arose about the time of and in connection with Absalom's rebellion, the majority of those round about David would be men whose thoughts and aims moved entirely in the military or political sphere. Hence: 4. *Here is a wise resolve.* (Vers. 1, 2.) He will say nothing. There would be many reasons for this. (1) No one would enter into his feelings. (2) What he said would be misunderstood. (3) He would consequently be misrepresented. (4) The more he said, the worse matters would be. And (5) if he told men what he thought and felt, he would be very likely to say something which he would afterwards regret. "That I sin not with my tongue." Hence silence is his wisest course. 5. *But suppressed grief consumes like a fire.* (Ver. 3.) There is nothing which so wears out the soul, nor which so burns within, as woe to which no vent can be given; so David found it, and consequently: 6. *The silence is broken.* "Then spake I with my tongue." But, in breaking the silence, he speaks not to man, but to God. After the word "tongue," the Authorized Version has a comma, but the Revised Version a colon, indicating that what he said is about to follow. What an infinite mercy that when we cannot say a word to man, through fear of being misunderstood, we can speak to God, and tell him exactly what we feel, as we feel it, knowing that then we touch a heart infinitely tender, and address an intelligence infinitely wise! 7. *In speaking to God he moans and groans.* (Vers. 4—6.) Does David speak petulantly? Is he asking God to let him know how long he has to endure all this? Is he adducing the frailty and nothingness of man as an argument against his being allowed to suffer thus? So many think, and some, as Calvin, are very hard on David—very. But why? *There is a vast difference between the fretfulness of an overburdened man and the waywardness of a rebellious man.* And he who knows our frame, takes the difference into account. When Elijah pettishly said, "Now, O Lord, take away my life!" God did not rebuke him; he sent an angel to him, and said, "Arise and eat; the journey is too great for thee."<sup>1</sup> 8. *He declares that his expectation of relief is in God alone.* (Ver. 7.) Just so. These are not the words of a rebellious, but of a trusting one. And from that point of view the whole psalm must be regarded (cf. Ps. lxii.). 9. *He will not utter a word of complaint.* (Ver. 9.) Render, "I am dumb; I open not my mouth, because thou hast done it" ('Variorum Bible'). "Thyself hast done it." On this fact faith fastens; and when this is the case, not a word of murmuring will escape the lips. The cry of a trusting soul is, "Here am I; let him do with me as seemeth him good" (2 Sam. xv. 26). 10. *Yet he supplicates.* (Vers. 8, 10, 13.) First, he desires deliverance from sin, then a mitigation of the suffering; such is the order, and the order which only a saint would name. The last verse is, in our versions, obscure. The word "spare" should not be read in the sense intended when we say, "If I am spared," etc., but in the sense of "O spare me this sorrow!" It is a repetition of ver. 10, "Remove this stroke away from me." It asks not for prolongation of life, but for mitigation of pain. The Revised Version margin gives a more correct translation of the phrase, "that I may recover strength;" rather, "that I may brighten up." No conclusion can be drawn from the end of the thirteenth verse, as to the psalmist's view of another life. The Prayer-book Version, "and be no more seen," gives the sense. 11. *The supplication is accompanied by a tender plea.* (Ver. 12.) "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." Archbishop Leighton beautifully expresses the force of this plea, "In this world, wherein thou hast appointed me to sojourn a few days, and I betake myself to thy protection in this strange country. I seek shelter under the shadow of thy wings, therefore have compassion upon me."

<sup>1</sup> See a sermon on Elijah, by Robertson of Brighton.

II. HOW FAR IS THE COURSE TAKEN BY DAVID, IN HIS AFFLICTION, A GUIDE FOR US? 1. *In some respects we may well imitate him.* In restraining our words before man, and in telling all our cares and woes to God exactly as we feel them, and in such a way as will best relieve an overburdened heart. 2. *In other respects we should go far beyond him.* Believers ought not to confine themselves now within the limits of such a prayer as this; they should *always* transcend it. We know more of God's Fatherly love; we know of our great High Priest; we know the fellowship of the Spirit; we know of "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" and hence our prayers should rise above those of David as much as the prayer of Eph. iii. 14—21 is above the level of this psalm. Note: The best preventive of sins of the tongue is the fuller and more frequent outpouring of the heart to God.—C.

Vers. 1—13.—*Lessons from a funeral.* It is told of Archbishop Leighton that a friend once met him by the way, and said, "You have been to hear a sermon?" His answer was, "I met a sermon—a sermon *de facto*, for I met a corpse, and rightly and profitably are the funeral rites performed, when the living lay it to heart." This psalm, so often read at deaths and funerals, suggests some precious lessons for such solemn occasions. 1. A funeral is a time for *silence*. There is much to think of and ponder in our hearts. We have need to put a restraint upon ourselves, lest we speak rashly or fall into idle and unprofitable talk. But silence cannot always be maintained. As we muse the fire burns, and we are constrained to speak. Let us take care that we speak wisely, with feeling and solemnity, as in the presence of God. 2. A funeral is a time when we are taught the *vanity of life*. One thing forced on our attention is that life has an *end*. We know it had a beginning, but we are slow to recognize, at least as to ourselves, that it must have an end. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." 3. Another thing brought to our mind is that life is *frail and soon passes away*. Measured by human standards, it is but a very little thing—a "hand-breadth;" looked at in the light of God and of eternity, it dwindles away to "nothing." And yet of what stupendous importance to us is this "nothing"! 4. Another thing is that life at the best is *full of sorrow and disappointment* (ver. 6). Sophocles, one of the wisest of the heathen, said, "I see that we who live are nothing else but images and vain shadows." The great orator, Burke, said, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!" Shakespeare also speaks to the same effect—

"Out, out, brief candle,  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more."

What, then, comes of all our labours, all our cares and disquietudes, all our hopes and ambitions? Is there no good that abideth? Is there no wealth laid up which will endure? Must we say, "All is vanity"? Yes, if there were no God, no future world. But let us take heart; let us turn from the thoughts that vex and disquiet our souls, and that leave us without hope, to the Lord our God and to Jesus Christ who has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. When we mourn the loss of friends, or when we take part with others in love and sympathy in the last rites of the dead, let us renew our faith in God. "My hope is in thee." Thus we shall gain strength to bear our trials meekly, and to rise, even at the grave's mouth, to the bright vision of immortality. Let us also cry to God for *deliverance from sin* (vers. 8—11), from the burden of its guilt, from the slavery of its power, from the miserable reproaches which it brings upon us from without and from within, from the base murmurings and discontent which it breeds, and from the cruel forebodings of evil with which it darkens our lives. God alone can bring us help and comfort in such straits. *Finally*, let us pray earnestly for *spiritual invigoration*, that we may not fail in our duty to God and to our brethren. We have not only to sympathize, but to act. The best way we can honour the dead is to work for the living. Every breach made in our ranks is a call to close up and to quit ourselves like men, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Every bereavement is a reminder to us that we too are but "strangers" and sojourners here, and that soon God will call us home. If some father in the Church is gathered as a "shock of corn in his season," let us give thanks, and

take courage to follow in his steps; if some young man of rare gifts and promise, and very dear to our hearts, is cut down early, let us be assured that it is because his Master has need of him for service in nobler fields, and let us strive to fill up what he may have left undone of good work for God; if some child, the light of our eyes, has been taken from us, let us believe that it is to enter a higher school than ours, where the holy angels are the teachers, and where progress is quick and sure under the radiant smiles of God.—W. F.

Ver. 13.—*Death deprecated.* "Spare me!" This prayer is common. From many a bed of sickness, and in the time of weakness and of fear, the mournful cry goes up to heaven. Often there is a gracious answer (Isa. xxxviii. 2, 5). But the mercy of God is not always remembered, nor the vows made in trouble performed. The words suggest—

I. THAT DEATH IS AN EVENT OF DREAD SIGNIFICANCE. 1. *It puts an end to our present mode of being.* "Be no more." Yet a little while, and what a change! You will see no more with those eyes; your heart will cease to beat; and your spirit, disengaged from the flesh, will wing its flight to other worlds. What your experiences will be at the awful moment of dissolution, and afterwards, none can tell. All is mystery. 2. *It separates us from all we hold dear on earth.* "Go hence." This world is dear to us. Here we were born, and have lived; here our minds have been formed and powers developed; here we have tasted the delights of knowledge, of friendship, and of personal achievement; here, in a word, has been our home. To separate from all, to have no more anything to do with what goes on under the sun, is a distressing thing. No wonder if we recoil with pain. 3. *It settles for ever our spiritual destiny.* "Before I go hence." Life is associated with hope, death with doom. So long as a man lives, there is a possibility of amendment. Errors may be corrected, follies retrieved, evil courses abandoned; but let death come, and it will end all this. Any event that affects our future is important, but this is the most important of all.

"Great God, on what a slender thread  
Hang everlasting things!  
The eternal states of all the dead  
Upon life's feeble strings!"

No wonder, if in thought of these things, we should cry, "Spare me!"

II. THAT GOOD MEN SOMETIMES SHRINK FROM DEATH UNDER A SENSE OF WEAKNESS AND UNPREPAREDNESS. Some are prepared to die. But such a state of mind is rare and inconstant. The best of men have their times of misgiving, as well as their moments of exulting faith. Doubting Castle and the Valley of the Shadow of Death lie in the pilgrim's path, as well as the Delectable Mountains. Even the sweet Land of Beulah is bounded by the cold flood and the swellings of Jordan. The moods of the soul vary. He who says to-day, "I will fear no evil" (Ps. xxiii. 4), may cry to-morrow from the dust, "Oh, spare me!" Paul had a large experience. He had been "in deaths oft" (2 Cor. xi. 23); his heart had been well-nigh broken by separations (Acts xx. 37); his whole soul shuddered at the thought of being a "castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27); but what chiefly moved him in the thought of death was sin. "The sting of death is sin." And this has been the feeling of many, and therefore the cry is not merely, "Spare me!" but, "that I may recover strength." 1. *Strength is needed to face death with fortitude.* 2. *Strength is lost through sin.* There is the action of the body (ver. 11) and of the affections (ver. 12), but worst of all is sin. It clouds the mind, burdens the conscience, racks the heart, darkens the future (Ps. xxxi. 10). 3. *Strength may be recovered if sought in due time.* "Before I go hence." To everything there is a season. Hence the urgency of the prayer. Life should be used for invigoration of the soul. To be ready we must have our lamps burning. We all receive warnings. Perhaps we have been "spared" already. Therefore take heed. It is as we can say, "To me to live is Christ," that we can add, "To die is gain."

III. THAT IN THE SOUL'S DARKEST HOUR GOD IS A SUFFICIENT REFUGE. "Spare me!" Why? Is it that you are young, that you have bright hopes, that you are concerned about those near and dear to you, that you have the consciousness of powers

unused, or that you desire to do more for God than you have yet done? The great thing is—Are you seeking this high boon for yourself or for God? If you put your hand in the fire, or cast yourself before the railway car, what boots it to cry, “Spare me”? We can only be spared, in the truest and best sense, by being brought nearer God. God is the Lord of life (1 Sam. ii. 6; Rev. i. 18); God is very pitiful and of tender mercy (Exod. xxxiii. 11); God is mighty to save. Let us, therefore, trust in him. “Spare me!”—if not the body, the soul; if not to longer life on earth, to eternal life with thee in heaven.—W. F.

**Vers. 1—13.—The afflicted man.** The old question of the retributive justice of God lies at the bottom of this psalm. Why should the righteous be afflicted and the wicked prosper, since the sins of the latter are greater and more numerous than those of the former? But he has determined that he will not discuss his difficulties before the wicked, lest he should seem to complain of the Divine ways. But when he can no longer restrain speech, this is what he says, in which we have two main divisions of thought.

**I. AN AFFLICTED MAN'S PERPLEXITIES.** (Vers. 1—6.) 1. *He wishes to know when his sufferings shall come to an end—in death.* (Ver. 4.) 2. *He is deeply impressed that human life should be so brief and fleeting.* (Ver. 5.) Man is but a breath, so that it seems scarcely worth while to live. 3. *The restless exertions which men make here are to no purpose.* (Ver. 6.) Men are but fleeting shadows, and all that they seek for is evanescent; they are troubled in vain.

**II. THE AFFLICTED MAN'S HOPE.** (Vers. 7—13.) In God. 1. *The good man is waiting for God.* (Ver. 7.) To unfold his purpose toward him more fully. 2. *To be delivered from all his transgressions.* (Ver. 8.) 3. *His hope in God teaches him self-restraint.* (Ver. 9.) 4. *Teaches him to pray for the Divine mercy to remove his sufferings.* (Ver. 10.) 5. *He pleads for mercy because of the brevity of his life.* (Ver. 12.) A stranger, “one who is but a passing guest;” a sojourner, “one who settles for a time in a country, but is not a native of it.” 6. *And because it is near its close.* (Ver. 13.) I shall soon be no more. Help before it is too late for help. Such faith in God, with such views of this life as being all, is something marvellous, when compared with our faith in him, who believe in an immortal life.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XL.

**THE** occasion of this psalm is some great deliverance which has been vouchsafed to the author of it, for which he desires to praise and thank God. Of this deliverance he speaks in vers. 1—3, which form a sort of introduction to the whole. He then passes on to a more general praise of God for all his glorious manifestations of himself in the history of his people (ver. 5). The thought next occurs—How is he (the writer) to manifest his gratitude? And this leads to the noble outburst in vers. 6—10. Not by sacrifice and offering, not by a mere legal and formal obedience, but by complete devotion of the inner man as regards himself (vers. 6—8), and constant proclamation of God's goodness as regards others (vers. 9, 10). The strain then changes. Although recently delivered from some great peril, the psalmist is still encompassed by sufferings and

dangers. There are sin and infirmity within (ver. 12), there are cruel enemies without (vers. 14, 15). He therefore (in vers. 11—17) betakes himself to humble supplication for himself (vers. 11, 13, 17) and for the godly generally (ver. 16), that God will be their Helper and Defender, and, above all, will “make no tarrying” (ver. 17).

The author of the psalm, according to the title, was David, and no argument of the least weight has been brought against this view. The occasion may be conjectured to have been his restoration to his throne after the brief usurpation of Absalom. Absalom's aiders and abettors may be alluded to in ver. 4, and the remnant of his party in ver. 14.

The psalm falls into three portions: (1) the introduction (vers. 1—3); (2) praise of God and promise of obedience (vers. 4—10); (3) prayer to God (vers. 11—17).

Ver. 1.—I waited patiently for the Lord; literally, *waiting, I waited*—a common Hebrew idiom, when an idea is to be emphasized. No writer enforces upon us more earnestly than David the duty of awaiting God's pleasure (Psa. xxvii. 14; xxxvii. 7; lxii. 1, 5; lxix. 3, etc.). And he inclined unto me; literally, *bent towards me*—an anthropomorphism, but most expressive. And heard my cry; *i.e.* answered it—gave me what I prayed for.

Ver. 2.—He brought me up also out of an horrible pit; literally, *a pit of tumult or uproar*, which is variously explained. Some imagine a pit with rushing water at the bottom of it, but such pits are scarcely known in Palestine. Others a pit which is filled with noise as a warrior, with crash of arms and amid the shouts of enemies, falls into it. But pits, though used in hunting, were not employed in warfare. The explanation that *יָמָא* here is to be taken in the secondary sense of "destruction" or "misery," seems to me preferable (see the Septuagint, *ἐκ λάκκου ταραχώρας*). Out of the miry clay (comp. Ps. lxix. 2, 14). Such "clay" would be frequently found at the bottom of disused cisterns. And set my feet upon a rock; *i.e.* upon solid ground, where I had a firm footing. And established my goings; literally, *and make my steps firm* (comp. Psa. xvii. 5; xlviii. 36; xciv. 18).

Ver. 3.—And he hath put a new song in my mouth (see the comment on Ps. xxxiii. 3). Even praise unto our God. Mercy and praise are cause and effect. The deliverance recorded in ver. 2 produces the praise of vers. 3—5. The phrase, "*our God*," shows us how David instinctively identifies himself with his people. A mercy shown to him is one shown to them. Many shall see it, and fear (comp. Deut. xiii. 11; xvii. 13; xix. 20; xxi. 21, where the phrase, "all Israel shall hear and fear," is used of the effect produced by the capital punishment of a high-handed transgressor of the Law). There may be an allusion here to Absalom's end, which was probably followed by a certain number of executions. And shall trust in the Lord; *i.e.* shall have their faith in God strengthened.

Ver. 4.—Blessed is that man (rather, *the man*) that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud; or, *turneth not to the proud*—does not go over to their party or espouse their principles. Absalom's adherents are probably the persons intended. Nor such as turn aside to lies; *i.e.* "prefer falsehood to truth," the cause of the ungodly to that of God himself.

Ver. 5.—Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done. It is not only for his recent deliverance (ver. 2) that the psalmist owes thanks and

gratitude to God. God's mercies in the past have been countless, and have laid him under unspeakable obligations. And thy thoughts which are to us-ward. God's thoughtfulness for man, his consideration and providential care, deserve praise and thanks equally with his wondrous acts. They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee. They are so numerous that it is impossible to reckon them up. Many of them, moreover, are secret, and escape our notice. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. Words, therefore, are insufficient; and some better return than mere words must be found.

Ver. 6.—Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire. Will the right return be by sacrifices and burnt offerings? No, the psalmist answers to himself; it is not these which God really "desires." Samuel had already preached the doctrine, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. xv. 22). David goes further. Apart from a spirit of obedience, sacrifice and offering are not desired or required at all; rather, as Isaiah says, they are a weariness and an abomination (Isa. i. 11, 12). The one thing needed is obedience—a cheerful, willing obedience to all that God reveals as his will. Mine ears hast thou opened. Either, "Thou hast taken away my deafness, and given me ears open to receive and embrace thy Law;" or, perhaps, with special reference to Exod. xxi. 6 and Deut. xv. 17, "Thou hast accepted me as thy voluntary servant, and bored through mine ear, to mark that I am thy servant for ever." Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Of the four kinds of offering mentioned in this verse, the first (*זֶבֶחַ*) is the ordinary offering of a victim at the altar in sacrifice; the second (*מִנְחָה*), the meat offering of flour, with oil and frankincense accompanying it; the third (*עֹלָה*) is the "whole burnt offering," representative of complete self-sacrifice; and the fourth (*חַטָּאת*), the "sin offering," or "trespass offering," of which the special intention was expiation.

Ver. 7.—Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me; rather, *then said I, Lo, I come with the roll of the book written concerning me*. "Then" means "as soon as my ears were opened." "Lo, I come," marks ready and prompt obedience (see Numb. xxii. 38; 2 Sam. xix. 20). The psalmist represents himself as bringing with him "the roll of the book," *i.e.* the book of the Law in its ordinary form of a parchment roll, to show what it is that he is prepared to obey. This book, he says, is written "concerning him," since it contains precepts concerning a king's duties (Deut. xvii. 14—20).

Ver. 8.—I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy Law is within my heart. The obedience to be rendered will be a true and acceptable obedience, (1) cheerful, and (2) from the heart. Consciously or unconsciously, David speaks as the type of Christ (see Heb. x. 5—7).

Ver. 9.—I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: rather, *I have proclaimed righteousness*. David has sung the praises of God in the “great congregation,” and extolled his righteousness and truth (Ps. xxxv. 18). He has not “preached,” in the modern sense of the word, since the preaching office was reserved for the priests and Levites. Lo, I have not refrained my lips; or, *I will not refrain my lips*. I will continue to glorify thee openly, and praise thy Name while I have my being (Pa. civ. 33). O Lord, thou knowest; i.e. thou knowest the truth of my statement as to the past, and the sincerity of my promise as to the future.

Ver. 10.—I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation. David's psalms furnish a running commentary on these statements. Composed, as appears from the titles, mainly for use in the “great congregation,” they set forth the righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, loving-kindness, and truth of God in the strongest possible way. Contemporary Israel, and later Israel, and the Church which has succeeded to the place of the original Israelites, and become “the Israel of God,” are alike indebted to him for the wonderful strains in which he has shown forth and magnified these qualities of the Almighty.

Ver. 11.—Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord. The applicatory portion of the psalm here commences. David beaeches God, whose loving-kindness is so great (ver. 10), not to withhold from him those “tender mercies” which he lavishes so freely. As he is bent on “not withholding,” or “refraining,” his lips (ver. 9), so it is fitting that God should not “withhold,” or “refrain” (לִּשְׁכֹּחַ) his kindness. Let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me (compare the last clause of ver. 10).

Ver. 12.—For innumerable evils have compassed me about; literally, *for evils have gathered upon me until there is no number* (comp. vers. 1, 2). The exact nature of the “evils” is not mentioned; but the worst of them appears to be “the deep and bitter consciousness of sin” revealed in the next clause. Another was, beyond all doubt, the continued animosity of enemies (ver. 14). Mental and bodily weakness may have been added, and have completed the crush-

ing load whereof complaint is made. It is noted that the exceedingly deep consciousness of sin here displayed “belonged altogether to a late part of David's life” (Canon Cook). Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; rather, *so that I am not able to see*. An actual failure of sight seems to be intended (comp. Ps. vi. 7; xxxi. 9; xxviii. 10). They are more than the hairs of my head; i.e. they are more in number. Therefore my heart faileth me; i.e. “my courage” and “my strength of mind” (comp. Ps. xxxviii. 10).

Ver. 13.—Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me. Though one deliverance is just effected (ver. 2), it is not enough; something more is required. The psalmist's life is still threatened by enemies (ver. 14); he is still scoffed at and flouted (ver. 15). “Lord, make haste to help me; literally, *Lord, make haste to my help* (comp. Ps. xxii. 19; xxxi. 2; xxxviii. 22). The Church follows the example set, when she says in her versicles, “O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us.”

Ver. 14.—Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward, and put to shame, that wish me evil. The remainder of the psalm from this point is detached later on in the Psalter, and becomes a separate psalm—the seventieth. Whether the detachment was the work of David or another, is uncertain. The differences between the two versions are slight (see the comment on Ps. lxx.). The present verse repeats almost exactly Ps. xxxv. 4 and 26. It is again repeated, with slight variations, in Ps. lxxi. 13.

Ver. 15.—Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame; rather, *by reason of their shame* (Kay, Alexander, Revised Version). Let the shame and disgrace that attach to them (ver. 14) cause them to be desolate, or deserted of all. That say unto me, Aha, aha! (comp. Ps. xxxv. 21, 25).

Ver. 16.—Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee. The psalmist cannot long be satisfied with mere prayer for *self*. He must extend his supplication, and make it cover the whole body of the faithful, “all those that seek God” (comp. Ps. xxv. 2, 3, 20—22; xxviii. 1—9, etc.). Let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified; i.e. “Give them constant occasion to say, and give them the grateful heart to say, The Lord be praised for his mercies” (comp. Ps. xxxv. 27).

Ver. 17.—But I am poor and needy. David could say this in time of trouble. No one is more in need than a disrowned king, driven from his throne and land, and not

yet restored to either (2 Sam. ix. 4—20). Yet the Lord thinketh upon me. The "poor and needy" are those whom God especially considers (see Pss. ix. 18; x. 12, 17, 18;

xxxiv. 6; xxxv. 10, etc.). Thou art my Help and my Deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God (comp. ver. 13, and the comment *ad loc.*)

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 3.—*The song learned in tribulation.* "He hath put a new song," etc. Trouble impoverishes the children of this world, but enriches the children of God. As St. Paul says, if our hope in Christ were an illusion, Christians would be of all men most pitiable; just as one who has been left heir to an immense fortune, and then by discovery of a later will loses all, is far poorer than he was before. But, as our hope is no illusion, but "a living hope," resting on a living Saviour, and the word of the living God, this life is immensely the richer for it. The "new song" of which the text speaks is one to learn which the heart must be tutored in the school of trouble.

I. A SONG OF DELIVERANCE. An ungodly heart, emerging from trouble, has the sense of *relief, escape, not deliverance.* Like a shipwrecked man, swimming for his life, heaved by a high wave on shore; not like sinking Peter, caught in the hand of Jesus, treading the waves at his Saviour's side. The difference is immense. Was it worth while for the mariner to be shipwrecked, half-drowned, and lose his all, for the pleasure of standing again on dry ground? Certainly not. He has lost much, gained nothing. But was it worth while for Peter to go through that terrible experience? Had the night been twice as dark, the storm twice as fierce, had he sunk to the very bottom, it would have been a small price to pay for the joy of feeling himself grasped and lifted up in the Saviour's hand; the triumph of walking on the raging waters at his side (see Ps. xxxiv. 4—6, 17).

II. A SONG OF FORGIVENESS. The deliverance celebrated was not from mere calamity, but from guilt and its terrible consequences (see ver. 12). This is taking the psalm as uttering David's own experience. But the contrast is so startling, even violent, between the tranquil thankfulness, sense of rectitude, and spiritual insight of vers. 4—10, and the awful sense of sin in ver. 12, that it seems very hard to reconcile, except by understanding that the Spirit of prophecy here made David the mouth-piece of an obedience, excelling and superseding sacrifice, only realized in Christ; and of that appalling, overwhelming view and sense of the terrific nature and amount of human guilt, which only he could have who "knew no sin," but "was made sin for us."

III. A SONG OF PRAISE. Deliverance is sweetest, most joyful, in the exercise of God's love, power, care; the answer to prayer; the fulfilment of promise. Forgiveness of sin is, of all God's good gifts, that which most reveals his love in compassion for the unworthy and disobedient, and in the provision of atonement. "Herein is love" (1 John iv. 9, 10; Rom. v. 8).

IV. A SONG OF DEEPEENED EXPERIENCE; enriched spiritual life; wiser, stronger, humbler faith. When tribulation has wrought patience (Rom. v. 3, 4); when "our extremity has been God's opportunity," and his presence has grown more real, his promises more precious and full of comfort; when we have learned to pray as never before, and prayer has been answered; when we have been made to feel our own utter weakness, and our Saviour's strength has been perfected in us;—then the very trial which threatened to confound and uproot our faith becomes the school in which we learn to trust God and know him, and therefore to praise him, as never before (1 Pet. i. 7). So we gain some foretaste of the "new song" sung before the throne (Rev. v. 9, 10).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Out of the pit and on the rock: a song of praise.* The title of the psalm indicates that it is one of David's: against that no adequate argument has been raised.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, as David's we regard it. We are called on to a treatment of it in

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Moll's introduction to this psalm in Schaff's Lange.



three several topics. In this, the first, we look at it as a song of praise for delivering mercy—for delivering mercy experienced by the psalmist himself, who, having written this grateful hymn, hands it “to the chief musician” for use in sanctuary service. Where can our notes of praise for Divine interposition be more appropriately sung than in the fellowship of the saints in the house of the Lord? We are left in doubt, indeed, as to whether the help thus celebrated was temporal or spiritual. Either way, the progression of thought in these ten verses is the same. For homiletical purposes we can scarcely let our remarks run on both lines at once. We shall, therefore, confine our thoughts to one kind of deliverance, viz. that from spiritual distress; while a pulpit expositor will find the progression of thought equally appropriate, should he desire to use it to incite to praise for temporal mercy. But our present theme is—*praise for delivering grace*.

I. **HERE IS A CASE OF SORE DISTRESS.**<sup>1</sup> (Ver. 2.) “An horrible pit;” “the miry clay.” Two very striking expressions, which may well represent, figuratively, the wretchedness and peril of a man who is deep down in the mire of sin and guilt, and on whose conscience the load of guilt presses so heavily, that he seems to be sinking—to have no standing; as if he must soon be swallowed up in misery and despair.

II. **THE DISTRESS LEADS TO PRAYER.** (Ver. 1.) There was a “cry” sent up to God for help. And this help seemed long delayed. There was a prolonged waiting in agony of prayer, that deliverance would come. The Hebrew is not exactly, “I waited *patiently*,” but “waiting, I waited,” signifying “I waited long.” He who, broken down under conviction of sin, pleads with God for mercy, and will not let him go except he blesses him,—such a one shall never wait in vain.

III. **PRAYER IS ANSWERED, AND DELIVERING GRACE IS VOUCHSAFED.** (Ver. 2.) How great the change! From sinking in a pit, the psalmist is lifted up and set upon a rock! How apt and beautiful the figure to set forth the change in the penitent’s position, when, after being weighed down by sin, he is lifted up and set firmly on the Rock of Ages!

IV. **HENCE THERE IS A NEW SONG IN THE MOUTH.** (Ver. 3.) How often do we read of a new song! The song of redeeming grace is new, superadded to the song of creation. It will be ever new; whether on earth or in heaven, it can never grow old, it can lose none of its freshness and glory!

V. **AS THE RESULT, THERE IS A TWOFOLD EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE.** 1. *Surrender of will, heart, life, and all, to God.* (Vers. 6—8.) “In the roll of the book” it was prescribed that Israel’s king was to fulfil the will of God, and that such fulfilment of the will of God was more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Note: The doctrine here expressed is no mark of a later date than David (see 1 Sam. xii.; xv. 22; Pss. i.; li. 16; Isa. i. 11; Jer. vii. 21; Hos. vi. 6; Micah vi. 1—8). 2. *The proclamation of God’s mercy before men.* (Vers. 9, 10.) There is nothing like the experience of “grace abounding to the chief of sinners,” to give power in speaking for God. He who having been first “in the pit,” then “on his knees,” then “on the Rock,” is the man who will have power when he stands “in the pulpit.”—C.

Vers. 11—17.—“*Poor and needy:*” a *prayer and a plea*. There are many psalms which begin in a sigh and end with a song, showing us that even in the act of waiting before God, and of waiting on God, the darkness often passes away. We find our burden rolling off in the very act and energy of prayer. In this psalm, however, matters are reversed; and immediately following on a song of triumph and a vow of surrender, there is a piteous wail. This dissimilarity, nay, almost discordance, has led to a very general opinion that what here seems to be the latter part of this psalm is actually another psalm, which has somehow or other come to be attached to this one. The probability of this is confirmed by the fact that Ps. lxx. is the same as the close of Ps. xl. But, of course, at this distance of time, data which would fully explain that cannot be expected to be available. Still, it is a great comfort to be permitted to think of this paragraph as being penned at a different time and under different circumstances from those which called forth the preceding ten verses. It would be discouraging,

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Perowne’s notes throughout this psalm are even more than usually full and helpful.

indeed, if we found that in one and the same breath the psalmist was triumphantly set upon a rock, and then in a minute or two bowed down with a weight of woe! We are not called on to entertain such a doleful supposition; and are glad, therefore, to deal with this piteous prayer and plea as standing by itself. It is not difficult to seize the progress of the thought.

I. HERE IS A SOUL IN DEEP DISTRESS. (Ver. 12.) Whether the "evils" are the iniquities themselves, or the form in which those iniquities are brought home to him, is not absolutely clear. Probably the latter is the case. Very often surrounding circumstances may bring to us bitterly painful reminders of past sin. And this may be one of God's means of bringing a soul to repentance through the avenue of remorse and shame.

II. HERE IS AN UTTER ABSENCE OF SYMPATHY FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD. Yea, something more than a lack of sympathy; for there is ridicule (ver. 15), there is joy over his sorrow (ver. 14, latter part); there is even an effort to destroy his peace, and perchance to further a plot against his life. Note: In the moments of deepest distress, when we look for succour from man, we find that the greater part are so engrossed in their own affairs, that they have never a tear to shed over another's sorrows, nor a hand to help in another's needs. This is hard. But it is a part of the discipline of life; and it is made use of by God to drive us to himself.

III. THE PSALMIST IS SHUT UP TO GOD. (Vers. 11, 13, 17.) It is not for nought that we are sometimes shut off from the sympathies of man. However trying, it is an infinite mercy when we are left with God alone. There, however, we have a perpetual Refuge. There are no fewer than four comforting thoughts specified here. (1) There is *the name—Jehovah*; (2) there is *the assurance of having a share in the thoughts of God* (ver. 17); there is in God (3) *loving-kindness*; and (4) *faithfulness*. "Thy truth," *i.e.* thy fidelity to thy promises. Note: Whoever has such a Refuge to which to flee, is well prepared for the worst of times.

IV. TO GOD HE UTTERS A FERVENT, PLEADING PRAYER. 1. One part of his prayer, and a prominent part too, is *against his enemies*. (Ver. 15.) We need not imitate David here" (see our homily on Ps. xxxv.). Let us leave our enemies in the hands of God; or, rather, let us pray for them. 2. A second part of his prayer is *on behalf of the godly*. (Ver. 16.) Note: This indicates that the psalmist was not moved by private feeling only, but by a pious public spirit. 3. A third part of his prayer is *for himself*. (Vers. 13 and 17.) Note: It will be very selfish of us if we pray *only* for ourselves, and very unnatural if we do not include ourselves.—C.

Vers. 6—8 (taken along with Heb. x. 5—9).—*The supreme surrender, and its eternal value*. That some of the psalms are applied to Christ does not warrant us in applying them all to him;<sup>1</sup> and even if some verses of any one psalm are applied to the Messiah, we are not thereby warranted in applying all the verses in such psalm to him.<sup>2</sup> There are *direct* Messianic psalms, which apply only to the Lord Jesus Christ; such are the second and the hundred and tenth psalms. Critics—some of them, at least—demur to this as being contrary to psychological law. But it is not merely by the psychological law of the natural man that these Messianic psalms are declared to have been written. We are pointed, for *their* origin, to a fourfold divergence from naturalistic psychology. 1. It is not of psychology we have to think, but of pneumatology. 2. Of the pneumatology of the spiritual man. 3. Of the pneumatology of the spiritual man when "borne along" by the Divine Pneuma. 4. Of such action of the Divine Pneuma on the human for a specific Divine purpose. All this is indicated in 2 Pet. i. 21; and therefore all such critics as those to which we refer are totally beside the mark (see our remarks on Ps. xxxii.). But there are also psalms which are *indirectly* Messianic. They are marked, speaking generally, by the pronoun "I." The writer speaks for himself, in the first instance; but whether he knew or intended it or not, the words had such a far-reachingness about them, that they could only be filled up in their perfect meaning by the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> Such is the case with the verses now

<sup>1</sup> See Perowne's able article on the theology of the Psalms: 'Introduction to the Psalms,' ch. iii.; and also his notes on Ps. xl.

<sup>2</sup> Not even Bishop Alexander seems to do so in this psalm. See his 'Witness of the Psalms,' etc., p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> See Dr. J. Pye Smith's 'Script. Test.,' vol. i. ch. iii.

before us. They first of all apply to David, and it is quite possible that he intended nothing further; if so, unwittingly to himself, he was borne along to utter words whose fulness of meaning could only be disclosed by the Incarnation, by David's Son, who had eternally been David's Lord; and, as such, the doctrines they contain are truly sublime. There is a somewhat difficult matter, which may be indicated by the questions: (1) How came the phrase, "Mine ears hast thou opened," to be rendered by the LXX., "A body hast thou prepared me"? and (2) whether of the two readings is to be accepted? Dean Alford (see his Commentary, *in loc.*) prefers to leave the difficulties unsolved. Dr. J. Pye Smith ('Script. Test.,' vol. i. p. 208), Dr. Boothroyd,<sup>1</sup> and others, with little hesitation, express their conviction that the *original* and correct phrase is that adopted by the LXX. Calmet<sup>2</sup> suggests, "On lit dans l'Hebreu *aures*, peut-être pour *corpus autem*." Archdeacon Farrar<sup>3</sup> says, in his notes on Heb. x. 5-7, "Finding the rendering in the LXX., believing it to represent the true sense of the original (as it does), and also seeing it to be eminently illustrative of his subject, the writer naturally adopts it." On the whole, then, the variation presents an interesting point in textual criticism, rather than any doctrinal difficulty. Since, in either case, the substantial meaning is, "My bodily frame has been marked out and sealed for the performance of thy will." By the very frequent quotation from the LXX. rather than from the Hebrew, even when they vary, the sacred writers show how much more important in their view was the main thought than the precise form of expression.<sup>4</sup> Having, then, in two separate homilies, dealt with this psalm in its application to David, we will now luxuriate in these verses as finding their highest and noblest application in Christ, and in him alone. In so doing, eight lines of thought require to be laid down.

I. THERE IS A MOMENTOUS PRINCIPLE UNDERLYING BOTH THE HEBREW AND THE CHRISTIAN ECONOMIES. It is this—that sin has disturbed the relations between man and God, so that nothing is right with man till these relations are readjusted and harmony is restored. The whole of the Mosaic economy was an education in the evil of sin. "By Law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 20); "The Law was our child-guide unto Christ" (Gal. iii. 24).

II. UNDER THE LAW, THE PEOPLE WERE TAUGHT THAT SIN MUST BE PUT AWAY BY SACRIFICE. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). But there will ever remain this wide, this infinite, difference between Jewish and pagan sacrifices—the pagan sacrifices started from man, and expressed his desire to propitiate God; the Jewish sacrifices were appointed by God himself, as by One pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, who would cancel guilt only as sin had been condemned.

III. THE VARIED SACRIFICES UNDER THE LAW WERE BUT A "FIGURE FOR THE TIME THEN PRESENT." The doctrine of the insufficiency of fleshly sacrifices is found not only in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but also in the Old Testament (see 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23; Pss. li. 16; xl. 6-8; Isa. i. 11-17; Jer. vii. 22, 23; Micah vi. 6-8). The more discerning and spiritually minded of the Hebrew saints saw and felt how ineffective were all the varied offerings<sup>5</sup> to ensure peace with God; and, because ineffective, they were necessarily typical. Hence—

IV. THE OLD TESTAMENT DISPENSATION WAS IN ITS ENTIRETY BUT PROPHETIC OF ONE WHO SHOULD COME. (Cf. Luke xxiv. 44; Acts xvii. 2, 3; xxviii. 23; Dan. ix. 24-27.) The entire argument in Heb. ix. and x. shows this. From the time when he who saw Messiah's day from afar said, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering," the outlook of the Church of God was towards One "who should come into the world."

<sup>1</sup> In the notes to his English Version and to his Hebrew Bible. Doddridge's note hereon is worth notice.

<sup>2</sup> 'Sainte Bible,' tome dixième, p. 287. So, also, Bengel, *in loc.*

<sup>3</sup> 'Early Days of Christianity,' vol. i. p. 443.

<sup>4</sup> See Archdeacon Farrar, *ut supra*, "The sacred writers never aim at verbal accuracy in their quotations. . . . They hold it sufficient to give the general sense."

<sup>5</sup> See Geikie, 'Hours with the Bible,' vol. iii. p. 277. On the varied sacrifices, see Oehler and Kurtz.

<sup>6</sup> "The great principle of a typical predictiveness in all Jewish history is the most satisfactory principle of interpretation in this and all similar cases" (Perowne, Introduction to Ps. xl.). To the same effect Dr. J. Pye Smith.

V. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, IN THE FACT OF HIS INCARNATION, DECLARED THAT HE HAD COME TO ACCOMPLISH THE UNFULFILLED MEANING OF OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES. We are not told *here* that he said this by his Spirit in the fortieth psalm, but that "when he came into the world" he said it. His entrance into our race was itself the great declaration.<sup>1</sup> That act of "emptying himself" spake volumes then, and will do through all time; and thus he put upon the ancient words the sublimest possible significance.

VI. IN ACCOMPLISHING TYPE AND PROPHECY, JESUS FULFILLED THE WORD OF GOD. His advent to earth was *an absolute self-surrender* to the Father's will (cf. John iv. 34; vi. 38). He fulfilled the Father's will (1) by revealing the Father; (2) by honouring the Law; (3) by condemning sin; (4) by thus laying a basis for the forgiveness of every penitent.

VII. ON THE GROUND OF THIS SURRENDER OF HIMSELF, SIN IS PUT AWAY. "He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 26). The absolute surrender of the will of the Eternal Son to the Eternal Father accomplished, in fact, that which all past sacrifices had accomplished only in figure. The surrender of *that* will ensured the fulfilment of all the purposes for which that will was surrendered. "He hath obtained the eternal redemption for us" (Heb. ix. 12; see John vi. 38—40).

VIII. SIN HAVING BEEN PUT AWAY FOR EVER, THE ANCIENT SACRIFICES HAVE CEASED FOR EVER. "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second" (Heb. x. 9); "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Any pretended repetition of the Saviour's sacrifice in the Mass is impiety. No repetition of it is possible. All Old Testament sacrifices have ceased; the Old Testament priesthood has ceased, and has never been renewed.<sup>2</sup> Note: What now remains for us? Only (1) to accept the one offering of the Son of God as all-sufficient;<sup>3</sup> and (2) to render now the only sacrifice which is possible for us, viz. the loving, the absolute surrender of our will to him who hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, that we may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.—C.

Vers. 1—17.—*Grace and gratitude.* "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord, look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." So said the prophet (Isa. li. 1), and it is good for us betimes to follow this counsel. It will not only teach us humility, but bind us more firmly in love and gratitude to God. It is the depth that proves the height. It is the misery that measures the mercy. It is by the utterness of the ruin that we realize the completeness of the restoration. It is by contemplating the gloom and horrors of the abyss into which we had sunk through sin, that we can best comprehend the wonders of the redemption wrought for us through Jesus Christ. The psalmist dwells upon two things.

I. WHAT GOD HAD DONE FOR HIS SERVANT. "Pit;" "clay." These images mark: 1. *The greatness of the danger.* The pit was "*horrible*," gloomy and terrible, the place of certain destruction if no help came (Gen. xxxvii. 24—27). The clay is called "*miry*," to indicate that there was no solidity—nothing but a foul, seething mass, where no rest could be found (Jer. xxxviii. 6). 2. *The greatness of the deliverance.* It was free—in God's time (ver. 1); complete (ver. 2); joy-inspiring (ver. 3); morally influential (ver. 4); prophetic, typifying and giving promise of many other "wonderful works" of God (ver. 5; cf. Paul, 1 Tim. i. 16). It should also be noticed that the deliverance was wrought out (1) in *harmony with eternal righteousness*. King Darius was bent on saving Daniel from the den of lions, and "laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him;" but in vain. The law was against him. The decree which he himself had established bound his hands. He could do nothing (Dan. vi. 14—17). But the King of kings is a just God and a Saviour (Isa. xlii. 21; Rom. iii. 25, 26). Also (2) in harmony with *man's freedom*. There is a certain order in the method. Man can do nothing without God, but God will do nothing without man. We are made willing in the day of his power. First there is the cry; then the hearing; then the lifting up;

<sup>1</sup> See Perowne's special note here, 6th edit., p. 350, col. i.

<sup>2</sup> Farrar's 'Lives of the Fathers,' vol. i. p. 101, lines 2 to 5.

<sup>3</sup> "In this passage we have the theology as well as the fact of the Atonement" (Bishop Alexander).

then the setting upon the rock; then the new song and the new service, as the outflow and the expression of the new heart. "By grace are ye saved, through faith" (Eph. ii. 4—10; Rom. viii. 29, 30).

II. WHAT HIS SERVANT WOULD DO FOR GOD. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" is the question of the prophet; and he gives the answer, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 6—8). The same great truth had been taught long before by Samuel, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. xv. 22). 1. *The sacrifice of the will.* Without this all else is vain. There is death, not life; the letter, but not the spirit; the form of godliness, but not the power. 2. *The obedience of the life.* Whatever way we interpret the obscure phrase, "Mine ears hast thou opened," the meaning seems to be the free and complete surrender of the soul to God. The right disposition leads to the life-devotion (Rom. xii. 1; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15). 3. *The thanksgiving of the heart.* Both privately and publicly, in our daily life before God and before men, we are to serve in the spirit of love and joy. Amidst all the changes and chances of our mortal state, we should continue faithful to him who hath called us that we might show forth his praise. Thus we shall have part with those saints of God—

"Who carry music in their heart,  
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,  
Plying their daily task with busier feet,  
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

W. F.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The heart of Messiah.* "Lo, I come!" Many questions might be asked as to this announcement. Who is this? Whence, and whither, and for what purpose, does he come? It is enough that we can identify the Speaker (Luke xxiv. 44; Heb. x. 5—7). Let us therefore ponder his words.

I. THE WILL OF GOD WAS THE CHIEF THOUGHT OF HIS HEART. We see this in his earthly life. See him at his first Passover. When Joseph and Mary found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, his answer was, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He was but twelve, and yet, at that tender age, how intense his consciousness of the trust committed to him! So it was on his baptism at the Jordan (Matt. iii. 15); in the temptation in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 4); at the well of Jacob (John iv. 34); and onward to the end. Daily, hourly, constantly, to the last moment, it was his chief thought to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work (John iii. 34; v. 19; vi. 37). Evermore, as the will of the Father was revealed to him, it was accepted and obeyed in the spirit of love. The will of the Father was equally and truly the will of the Son. This is true freedom.

II. THE WILL OF GOD WAS THE SECRET STRENGTH OF HIS HEART. It was said of Moses, "He endured as seeing him who is invisible." So it has been with God's servants in every age. The sense of the invisible, commerce and familiarity with the great unseen world, alliance with God, make men strong for duty. So it was in the highest sense with Christ. The will of God was the strength of his heart, because: 1. It harmonized with *eternal righteousness*. Our Lord knew he had the most absolute conviction, that in doing the will of God he was walking in the path of truth and righteousness. Hence he was strong and brave (Isa. xlii. 1—4). 2. It harmonized with the *highest good of man*. When men's hearts are not in their work, they soon weary. But when labour is congenial, it is no longer a task and a burden, but a delight. So it was with Newton in his love of truth; with Howard and Wilberforce and Livingstone, in their generous enthusiasm for humanity. And so it was in the most perfect way with our Lord. He came to save, and not to destroy.

"Good will to men and zeal for God  
His every thought engross."

III. THE WILL OF GOD WAS THE SUPREME JOY AND SATISFACTION OF HIS HEART. Thus: 1. He enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God (John xv. 10). 2. He perfectly filled up the plan of God for the development of his human nature. His life was the only life that answered perfectly to the will of God—with no defect to be supplied, no

error to be corrected, no blemish to be remedied. 3. He accomplished the redemption of his people. 4. He glorified the Father.—W. F.

Ver. 17.—*God's thoughts*. "I am"—what? The question is important. In order to judge rightly, we must have a right standard. We are not to measure ourselves by ourselves, or by the rules of society, but by the perfect Law of God (2 Cor. x. 12; Rom. iii. 20). "I am *poor and needy*." What then? If comparing ourselves with all that is true and noble and good, with all that is highest and holiest, we are penetrated with a sense of our own sins and unworthiness, what are we to do? Cast down, lying prone in the dust, there speaks within us the "still small voice" of consolation, "*Yet the Lord thinketh upon me*." Here is—

I. HOPE FOR THE WRETCHED. We may be "poor," wanting in all that is good. We may be not only "poor," but "needy," with cravings and desires which earth cannot satisfy. Like the miserable outcast, we may be ready to say, "No man cared for my soul" (Ps. cxlii. 4). Yet there is hope. God thinketh upon us. And we have the outcome of his thoughts. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). It is when we realize our state that we are open to help. It is when we turn to God that we find that he has already turned to us, and that his thoughts towards us are thoughts of mercy and of love (Isa. lv. 6—9).

II. COMFORT AMIDST THE DESOLATIONS OF LIFE. Many are "poor and needy" because bereft of what they held dear. In time of trouble what should we do? Some say, "Trial is common." Others tell us, "You have had your turn of joy: why complain now that you are visited with sorrow?" Others exhort us to patience; they say, "Time is the great healer." Others again exhort us to submission, to bow to the inevitable. To such and such-like we can but answer, as Job did, "Miserable comforters are ye all" (Job xvi. 2). But when we remember God, then we are truly comforted. Sympathy is sweet, but more is necessary for us. The Lord not only "thinketh upon us," but he has provided for us "strong consolation" (Heb. vi. 18). The Bible contains the thoughts of God, and it is rich in instruction and comfort. Christ Jesus has come to make known to us the thoughts of God, speaking to us as a Brother, in dear words of human speech, and remembering what he has said, we are comforted (Isa. xli. 14—17; John xiv. 1; 2 Cor. vii. 6; i. 3—6).

III. INSPIRATION FOR THE LABOUR OF LIFE. It is a great thing to know what our true work is; but we may know this and shrink with a sense of our unfitness. So it was with Moses, but God thought of him (Exod. iv. 10—14). So it has been in a humbler way with many. We feel, when face to face with duty, that we are ill equipped and weak. We are ready to halt. But if we keep our minds open, if we watch for opportunities, if we are ready to do the work that lies nearest to us, what our "hand findeth to do," God will not fail to help us. Whatever is good in us is of God, and sheweth that God thinketh upon us. Our best thoughts are his thoughts. All the greatest things done by men have been, first of all, God's thoughts, put into their minds to quicken, to inspire, to move them on to noble ends. So it was with Carey, and Wilberforce, and Raikes, and hosts of others. It is helpful to a servant to know that his master thinks of him; to a soldier that his captain thinks of him; to a young man, far from home, that his mother thinks of him; and so, and in a far higher way, it is inspiring and comforting to every true worker in the cause of truth, to know that Christ thinketh of him, and that whatever he does is done under the great Taskmaster's eye, and will not fail of due recognition and reward.—W. F.

Vers. 1—10.—*Thanksgiving and prayer*. The first part (vers. 1—10) is a thanksgiving, the second part a prayer. The situation is that of one who, on one side, set free from a heavy affliction, is still oppressed on the other. We have all ground for thanksgiving for the past, and for prayer for the present and future. This section may be divided thus: what God had done for the psalmist and for his country; and what the psalmist had done for God.

I. WHAT GOD HAD DONE. 1. *For the psalmist*. (1) Delivered him from threatened destruction into great safety. The specific nature of the salvation is not mentioned. But it suggests and describes what Christ does in the deliverance of the man who trusts in

him, the greatness of the salvation. (2) The deliverance had filled him with grateful joy. "Put a new song into his mouth." Every new experience of the Divine love should rouse anew the spirit of thanksgiving; it is a new revelation of God's mercy. His experience is, "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust." 2. *For the Hebrew people as a nation.* (Ver. 5.) Turns from the goodness of God towards himself to his larger manifestations of himself in the national history. His wonderful *thoughts* or purposes, and his wonderful *deeds* on behalf of Israel, are too great and too manifold to be enumerated. But we turn to what God is doing for the world, and say, "God so loved the world," etc.; not only our country, but the whole world. How great a *Worker* and *Thinker* God is for the whole universe!

II. WHAT THE PSALMIST HAD DONE FOR GOD. (Vers. 6—10.) To manifest his gratitude. 1. *By his deeds.* (Vers. 6—8.) (1) He gives obedience to his Law, instead of seeking to please him by sacrifice. God had opened his ears to hear and his eyes to read his will as prescribed to him in the roll of his book. Obedience better than any ceremonial observance. (2) His obedience was thus not only *intelligent*, but came from the *heart*. The Law was in his heart; he *loved* obedience. 2. *By his words.* (Vers. 9, 10.) Unwearied in proclaiming to others what Jehovah had done for him. (1) What he preached. The righteousness, faithfulness, and loving-kindness of God. He preached what he saw in his own history and the history of the nation. (2) Gratitude gave him courage openly to declare God's goodness. If he had been ungrateful, or had wanted courage, he might have been tempted to hide God's dealings among the secrets of his private experience. Every man's duty to profess his convictions; and to declare that he is on the side of Christ and the Church.—S.

Vers. 11—17.—*Discipline lifelong.* Though the sufferer has been delivered from one great distress, he is still encompassed by great sufferings and dangers, from which he prays to be rescued. Suggests—

I. THAT THE WORK OF OUR DISCIPLINE AND SALVATION IS A LIFELONG WORK. No one act of deliverance is sufficient; no one deliverance can cover the whole of our experience. 1. *Fresh sin brings a renewed consciousness of suffering.* (Ver. 12.) The psalmist suffered so in this respect that his *eyes became dim from exhaustion*; he felt his sins to be more than the hairs of his head, so that his *heart failed in strength*. Sense and soul both gave way. 2. *Men in high station are in constant danger from enemies.* (Vers. 14, 15.) However righteous in conduct and blameless in character. Bad men have selfish ends to attain, and they try to get good men out of their way by slander and persecution. 3. *As life advances, the sense of our poverty and need deepens.* (Ver. 17.) If we are growing wiser and better, we get a deeper insight into what we ought to be and might become, and so nourish a Divine discontent with our poverty and weakness.

II. LIFELONG NEED WILL BEGET LIFELONG PRAYER. 1. *Gratitude for the past will inspire us to prayer.* This was the case with the psalmist (vers. 1—10). 2. *We are encouraged to pray by the thought of the goodness of God.* (Ver. 11.) He appeals to "the tender mercies," "the loving-kindness," and "the truth," or the faithfulness, of God to those who trust in him. He knows that "God thinketh upon him." 3. *He appeals also to the retributive justice of God.* (Vers. 14, 15.) He is sure that God will deal righteously with his enemies. 4. *He is emboldened to seek for speedy deliverance.* (Ver. 17.) In the first verse he says he waited patiently for the Lord; here he becomes impatient for the Divine interference. The patience means *persevering* prayer; the impatience means *urgent* prayer; and both are right and acceptable and necessary to the believer in earnest about salvation.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XLI.

THE forty-first psalm completes the first book of the Psalter. All the psalms contained in it are assigned to David by the

PSALMS.

titles, except Pss. i., ii., x., and xxxiii. The present psalm is closely connected with the other psalms of the concluding group (Psa. xxxviii.—xli.), which seem to have been all composed a little before, during,

or just after the revolt of Absalom. It consists of an introduction (vers. 1—3), respecting the blessedness of those who “consider the poor;” a bitter complaint against his enemies generally, and one enemy in particular (vers. 4—9); and a conclusion, in which prayer and an expression of confident hope are united (vers. 10—12). The concluding paragraph (ver. 13) is no part of the psalm, but a mark of division between book i. and book ii. (compare the terminations of Ps. lxxii., lxxxix., and cvi.). Metrically, the psalm is remarkably regular, since it consists of four stanzas, each of three verses.

Ver. 1.—Blessed is he that considereth the poor. David had concluded the preceding psalm by calling himself “poor and needy.” He commences the present one by pronouncing a blessing on all those who “consider;” or tenderly regard, and, so far as they can, assist the poor and afflicted. It is not so much actual poverty, as humiliation and weakness, of which he is speaking. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble; literally, *in the day of evil*. As he has pity on his fellow-men, so God will have pity upon him (comp. Matt. vi. 14, 15; x. 42; xviii. 33; Prov. xix. 17; Eccles. xi. 1, etc.).

Ver. 2.—The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive. Continuance in life is always regarded as a blessing in the Old Testament; it is only in the New that to “depart, and be with Christ,” is pronounced “far better” (Phil. i. 23). And he shall be blessed upon the earth; *i.e.* his long life shall be a happy one. And thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies; rather, as in the margin, *do not thou deliver him* (comp. Ps. xxvii. 12; lxxiv. 19). The psalmist changes from dogmatic assertion to prayer, not, however, intending to express any doubt that his prayer will be granted.

Ver. 3.—The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. If he falls into a sickness, God will support him through it. Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness; literally, *thou wilt turn all his bed*; *i.e.* rearrange it, turn its cushions, make it such that he can comfortably lie on it (see Kay, who quotes Bellarmine). Others understand, “Thou wilt change his couch from one of sickness to one of convalescence.”

Ver. 4.—I said; rather, *as for me, I said*. The writer pointedly marks that he turns here from considering the blessedness of the compassionate man to contemplation of his own case—his afflictions and sufferings. Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul;

for I have sinned against thee. The worst of all his woes—the root and origin of them all—*fons et origo mali*, is his own sinfulness. Unless that is cured, all other alleviation is vain. Hence, after the first general cry for mercy, he goes to the root of the matter, “Heal my soul.” There, within me, in the depths of my nature, is the worst malady. Heal that, and soon all will be well with me.

Ver. 5.—Mine enemies speak evil of me. Another head of suffering, viz. misrepresentation, calumny, abuse, on the part of enemies. Absalom had stolen away the hearts of the children of Israel from David by misrepresenting him (2 Sam. xv. 3, 4). Shimei had followed the example, adding to his misrepresentation abuse and cursing (2 Sam. xvi. 5—8). Absalom’s aiders and abettors generally, no doubt, joined in the chorus. This, then, is David’s second subject of complaint, and one that he felt keenly—his enemies spoke evil of him. Further, they desired and anticipated his death. When (they said) shall he die, and his name perish? David evidently was, or had been, when his enemies thus spoke, on the bed of sickness, prostrate, and in danger of his life. While he thus suffered, they rejoiced, expecting his early demise. When he was dead, they intended that his name should “perish;” *i.e.* that his memory should be utterly rooted out.

Ver. 6.—And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity; rather, *he speaketh falsehood* (see the comment on Ps. xii. 2). It is suggested that Ahithophel is especially aimed at. But there is no proof of this. All the enemies are probably intended, only distributively instead of collectively. His heart gathereth iniquity to itself. Dr. Kay’s comment is, “He makes a show of friendship, using hollow compliments; but he is treasuring up every expression as material for misrepresentation.” When he goeth abroad, he telleth it. He reports what he has seen and heard, but untruly.

Ver. 7.—All that hate me whisper together against me; *i.e.* gather themselves into knots, and hold whispered conversations about me—as conspirators are apt to do. Against me do they devise my hurt; literally, *hurt to me*.

Ver. 8.—An evil disease (literally, *a thing of Belial*), say they, cleaveth fast unto him. (On the meaning of “Belial,” see the comment on Ps. xviii. 4.) The “thing of Belial” here intended may, perhaps, be the disease from which David was suffering, but is more probably some disgraceful charge or infamous calumny which had been circulated concerning him, and was now crushing him down. This calumny is represented as poured out upon him like a coating of molten metal (see Job xli. 23, 24), and so cleaving



to him. And now that he lieth; i.e. "now that he is prostrate upon a sick-bed." He shall rise up no more. He shall not recover, but die of his malady.

Ver. 9.—Yea, mine own familiar friend (literally, *the man of my peace*), in whom I trusted. Here Ahithophel is almost certainly intended. He is called "the man of my peace," since he was one of David's official counsellors (2 Sam. xv. 12), and consequently on the most friendly terms with him (comp. Ps. lv. 13, 14). Which did eat of my bread. At Oriental courts, the king's counsellors, together with many other members of the court, habitually "eat at the king's table" (comp. 2 Sam. ix. 7—13; 1 Kings iv. 23, 27; xviii. 19; Neh. v. 17; Esth. i. 10, 11; iii. 15, etc.). Hath lifted up his heel against me. (For Ahithophel's defection from David, and share in Absalom's conspiracy, see 2 Sam. xv. 12, 31; xvi. 15—23; xvii. 1—23.) His conduct is here compared to that of a vicious horse, which kicks his own master. (For the relation of type and antitype between Ahithophel and Judas, see John xv. 18.)

Ver. 10.—But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me (comp. ver. 4). The writer passes from complaint to prayer, and once more calls on God to deliver him. And raise me up. Falsify the prediction of my enemies (ver. 8): raise me up from my sick-bed, and re-establish me in a position of authority. That I may requite them. This was not

private revenge, but David's duty as a king (Rom. xiii. 4).

Ver. 11.—By this I know that thou favourest me; or, *delightest in me* (comp. Ps. xviii. 19; xxii. 8; 2 Sam. xv. 26). Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. David's enemies had not triumphed over him, and he felt assured that they would not be allowed to triumph. This assurance was so strong that he could make it an argument on which to ground his belief that God "delighted in him." David argues from effect to cause.

Ver. 12.—And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity (comp. Ps. xxvi. 1, and the comment *ad loc.*). And settest me before thy face for ever. So that there falls upon me the light of thy countenance (comp. Ps. iv. 6). The expression, "for ever," is remarkable in this connection, and may be fairly taken as indicating a hope of immortality (comp. Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15—xxiii. 6; xxx. 12).

Ver. 13.—Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen. A similar doxology occurs at the end of Ps. lxxii., lxxxix., and cvi., not (apparently) as part of the psalm to which it is attached, but as a mark of pause and separation. The Psalter is thus divided into five books (comp. Hippolyt., p. 153, edit. Lagarde, "The Hebrews divided the Psalter into five books, so that it is another Pentateuch").

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Considerate sympathy.* "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." A double blessing waits for those who are worthy of it, in these words—a blessing of heaven above, and a blessing of the deep that lieth under. As Holy Writ, they utter a Divine promise; as the voice of human experience, they breathe heart-felt gratitude. They are "the blessing of him that was ready to perish." This word "poor" is not to be restricted to what we specially call "poverty." It sometimes has that sense (e.g. Exod. xxiii. 3), but also means "weak, miserable, downcast." The psalm expressly refers to bodily sickness and weakness, aggravated by the heartless cruelty of false friends. Consider (1) the *reasons*, and (2) the *nature*, of this blessing.

I. THE REASON OF THE BLESSING. 1. *Considerate sympathy*, helpful compassion for the needy, weak, or suffering, is "blessed," because it is a feature of likeness to God. It is "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." See the Divine example and the practical inference (1 John iii. 16, 17). When our Lord rebuked the hypocrisy of Judas ("not that he cared for the poor"), he took care to add, "The poor always ye have with you" (John xii. 8). St. James keenly satirizes the mock charity in which words are not coupled with deeds (Jas. iii. 15, 16). Compassion for the poor runs through the Bible. Care for the poor, for widows, etc., was one of the earliest and most sacred cares of the primitive Church. Our innumerable hospitals and asylums of all kinds receive munificent support from many who lay no claim to Christian faith; yet they have their deep and sure root in Christian sympathy. They are among those blessings which "Religion scatters on her march to immortality" (Robert Hall). Two of the main forms of human suffering are specially set before us in these words—*poverty* and *sickness*. Poverty begins where plenty ends. A man is not to be counted "poor" because he dwells in a cottage, lives simply, dresses plainly, earns his children's bread

by the sweat of his brow, as long as his work is healthy, his food plentiful and wholesome, and he can keep out of debt, and have a little to give to God's work and to a needy neighbour. But when strength is overtasked, when toil and thrift cannot keep the wolf from the door, and work fails or health breaks down, and the question has to be faced how long the home can be kept together,—then, indeed, poverty is felt to be one of the bitterest forms of the curse which sin has brought into human life. For though this cruel form of suffering often falls on those who have not themselves to blame for it, somebody is to blame, or society is to blame. Trace it to its deepest root, and you shall find *sin*. And then it is that the pitiful eye of the All-giver rests on that darkened home, and his voice says, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Sickness often comes as the direct fruit of poverty. Often they terribly aggravate one another's burden. It would be a heart-rending sight to see all the sick-beds in a nation, or even in a single city; but a blessed and heavenly sight if we could see all the tender sympathy, self-sacrificing love, sleepless, patient labour, self-devoted skill, which sickness is hourly calling forth. None tread closer than the nurse and the physician in the earthly footsteps of him who "went about doing good." What a hard, selfish world, one imagines, this would become, were there no self-denying ministry to the helpless and suffering! So God brings good out of evil, and "blesses him that considereth the poor." Note the tender promise, ver. 3, Authorized Version, which, I doubt not, is the true sense. 2. There is *justice as well as mercy* in this claim, enforced not only by Christ's *example*, but by his *Law* (Gal. vi. 2). True, both poverty and disease are largely the direct result of sloth, intemperance, dishonesty, neglect, or other vices and follies—sin's wages. Yet even in these cases the heavy end of the burden very often falls on innocent shoulders. And in multitudes of cases these calamities come on those who have done their best. They fought bravely, but the battle of life went against them. The causes may lie far back in the past—in bad laws, misgovernment, wars, wasteful expenditure; or in trade disputes; or in far-off lands, by the failure of a crop or the origin of a pestilence. Then, since the poor and the sick are so largely the victims of the mistakes, follies, or crimes of society, nations, mankind; nay, even suffer often from the very causes by which others grow rich,—is it not simple justice that those for whom the great wheel of life is spinning a smooth and golden thread should step in to lift their burden, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"?

II. THE NATURE OF THE BLESSING HERE PRONOUNCED. 1. One of the greatest of all blessings is to be *like God* (Matt. v. 45). 2. It is blessed to be *God's almoner* (Matt. x. 8). 3. The sweetest happiness is to make others happy. 4. It is blessed to have a place in the prayers of God's afflicted children. Perhaps, if the balance could be struck, it would not be always where the giver expects; he may be more a debtor to their prayers than a creditor by his gifts. 5. After all this, it seems an over-measure of repayment to speak of any future recompense; yet our Saviour does (Luke xiv. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 17—19; Matt. x. 42).

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The poor man's charter; or, a blessing pronounced on the benevolent.* Though there is no sufficient reason to question the accuracy of the title of this psalm, yet the blessing here pronounced on benevolent souls is entirely independent of its human penman. The two key-words in the first verse—"considereth" and "the poor"—are words of very wide significance. The first would mean "he who takes a kindly, continuous, intelligent interest in, and who cherishes a tender sympathy for, them; and the word "poor" would include the weak, sick, insignificant, impoverished, wretched, and unfortunate—even the debtor and the slave. Now, we are so accustomed to such kindly thoughts for the helpless, that we often come to regard care for the poor as one of the "ordinary virtues of humanity;" yet such is very, very far from being the case. Where the light of Divine revelation has not shone, it is no social sin, in the estimation of men, to trample on the poor.<sup>1</sup> Thus the merciful consideration for

<sup>1</sup> Information on this and cognate themes will be found in Dr. Uhlhorn's 'Christian Charity in the Ancient Church,' the chapter entitled, "A World without Love;" the

"the poor, the fatherless, and the widow," shown in the Law of Moses,<sup>1</sup> marked an immense uplifting in legislation; while the continuation of this same philanthropy, on religious grounds, was made of so much account by the prophets, that if it was neglected, men's external worship was an offence in the sight of God (Isa. i. 17; x. 1, 2; iii. 14; lviii. 5—11; Jer. xxii. 3; Amos ii. 6). The Lord Jesus Christ confirmed all this by his precepts, illustrated it by his life, and actually deems it of so much importance that, looking onward to the time when he shall be the Judge of all the nations, he declares that, according as men have attended to his poor or not, will be the stupendous distance between a "Come, ye blessed!" and a "Depart, ye cursed!" (Matt. xxv. 31—46). Hence the theme before us now is one that is vitally bound up with the essentials of true religion and of acceptable worship to God, so that we have the warrant of the entire Scriptures for dealing with this blessing, which is here pronounced on the benevolent, as being not only the words of David, but a continuous utterance of Divine revelation from beginning to end. Hence it would wonderfully enlarge and strengthen the basis of such an appeal as this verse suggests, to combine with it the two benedictions in Matt. v. 7 and xxv. 34, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy;" "Come, ye blessed of my Father!"

I. THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD SHOWS US HOW TRULY MAN IS THE OBJECT OF A DIVINE REGARD. No one can study intelligently the book of God and compare it with the pagan estimate of human nature, without being struck with the amazing contrast between heathenism and Christianity, and, indeed, between heathenism and Hebraism. Often, indeed, both Moses and Christ are accused of indifference to the lot of the slave, because neither of them overthrew slavery with a single thrust; but they did a better and a nobler thing—they dropped those seeds of thought concerning man's dignity, concerning men's relation to God and to each other, that, in springing up and bearing fruit, would cause slavery to fall most utterly, never to rise again. And, even now, the kindly thoughts of and for us which pervade the book, given in germ in the Law of Moses, and in ripest form in the Epistles of St. John, are such that when they take effect in human hearts and lives, they turn selfishness to love; and if such effect were to be universal, we should have a Paradise below! A common Fatherhood is over all; hence a common brotherhood should bind all in one. "There is no respect of persons with God." To despise the poor, to turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High, the Lord approveth not. And this pure leaven of the kingdom is gradually diffusing itself through the race, and will, till the care of God for us all comes to be mirrored in our care for each other.

II. WHEN AND WHERE GOD'S CARE FOR MAN AS MAN IS UNDERSTOOD AND COPIED, THERE WILL SPRING UP PRACTICAL BENEVOLENCE; and this will take effect in every form in which such kindness can be shown. The special feature noted here is that of "considering the poor," which would involve a looking out for cases in which we can render aid of any kind whatever; and when such cases are before us, making them the objects of our deep interest and practical concern. Briefly we may set these under four heads. We should be ready and ever (1) anxious to be helps everywhere; (2) anxious to help men for Christ's sake; (3) anxiously caring for men *as men*, either because Christ died for them, or because Christ lives in them; and (4) anxiously seeking out the cases of special sorrow and distress, that we may cheer the suffering and the sad.<sup>2</sup>

Ven. Archdeacon Farrar's 'Early Days of Christianity,' vol. i. ch. i.; Schmidt's 'Essai sur la Civilisation de l'Empire Romain, et sa Transformation par la Christianisme;' Mr. Bruce's 'Gesta Christi;' and Dr. Storr on 'The Historical Effects of Christianity;' articles by the present writer in the 'Pulpit Commentary: First Epistle of John,' pp. 82, 105, 109; an article, "The Outcast Poor," *Contemporary Review*, December, 1883; and a small volume by Rev. Dr. Paton, M.A., on 'The Inner Mission of the Church.'

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Exod. xxiii. 11; Lev. xix. 10; xxiii. 22; xxv. 25; Deut. xv. 7. See articles by the present writer, 'Pulpit Commentary: Deuteronomy,' pp. 101, 102, 254—260, 356.

<sup>2</sup> "We must not imagine that the benediction pronounced belongs to all who casually give money to the poor, or leave it in their wills, or contribute to societies. . . . The blessing is for those whose habit it is to love their neighbour as themselves, and who, for Christ's sake, feed the hungry and clothe the naked. To imagine a man to be a saint who does not consider the poor as he has ability, is to conceive the fruitless fig tree to be acceptable. There will be sharp dealing with many professors on this point in the day when the King cometh in his glory" (C. H. Spurgeon, *in loc.*).

III. ON THOSE WHO LIVE A LIFE OF SUCH PRACTICAL BENEVOLENCE FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, THERE IS A BLESSING PRONOUNCED. It will be the blessing of both the Father and of the Son, yea, and of the Spirit too. The Spirit; for he pronounces it in the inbreathing of these sacred words. The Son; for he proclaims it now, as our Teacher, in the Sermon on the Mount, and will pronounce it, as Judge, at last. The Father; for the very words of the blessing which the Son pronounces are, "Ye blessed of my Father." In this love he blesses specially all whose love is the reflex of his own. And the people's blessing will attend him who lives to bless the people; in such a case, in a high and holy sense, "*vox populi, vox Dei.*"

IV. THE BLESSING OF HEAVEN ON THOSE WHO LIVE TO BLESS OTHERS IS DIVINELY RICH AND FULL. What does it involve? 1. *Divine approval*; for God's heart of love has diffused its own glow of sympathy within. 2. *The heart of the Lord Jesus is touched*; for he feels kindness done to others for his sake as done to him. Wonderful, indeed, is his "Inasmuch." 3. *Those who love like Jesus will find their home with him.* How inspiring are the words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father"! 4. *There will be the recompense of "a kingdom prepared."* Oh, how infinitely do the recompenses of abounding grace outweigh any little acts of kindness the saints may have shown to the poor of Christ! Only "grace" can account for a reward so large.

V. OF SUCH IMPORTANCE IS THIS LIFE OF SERVICE FOR OTHERS THAT, APART FROM IT, ALL RELIGIOUS FORM IS EMPTY AND VAIN. (Matt. vii. 12, 21—23; xxv. 41; Mark x. 21; Luke xvi. 19—31; 1 John iii. 17; Jas. ii. 6, 13; v. 1—4.) To call Christ "Lord, Lord," and then to disregard his injunctions, will be of no use. Note: Here are three lessons urgently calling for enforcement. 1. Let the agnostic and positivist, who are calling out for a religion that means "living for others," see if they have not here the religion for which they call, and which is only waiting for its professors to act up to it, to revolutionize the world. 2. Let but the spirit of the text inspire man universally, and all struggles and alienation between class and class would forthwith cease. 3. Let some who have given disproportionate attention to doctrine, and who have paid too little heed to life and love, aim at a readjustment. We want doctrine and life; not one without the other. 4. Let Christian Churches learn that if they would commend themselves to the age, they must live to serve the age, by holy thought, pure living, and manifested love! 5. Let us thank God with all our hearts for the ameliorating influence on the lot of man, of this Divine command to care for others; e.g. homes, refuges, hospitals, etc.—C.

Vers. 4, 10.—*Ill treated by man, he flees to God.* (Cf. homilies on Pss. vii., xvii. div. II., xxvi. div. III., xxxix. div. I. 4.)—C.

Vers. 5—9.—David suffers from *the harshness and treachery of men.* (Cf. homilies on Pss. xii., xvii. div. I., xxvi. div. II.)—C.

Ver. 9.—Here is an instance of *very special treachery*, which would be regarded as black indeed in the light of Oriental hospitality. Yet he who was in all points tempted like as we are, endured treachery viler still. To this reference is made in John xiii. 18. The note of Bishop Perowne hereon is so truly helpful, that we quote it in full below.<sup>1</sup>—C.

<sup>1</sup> "The Oriental feeling as to the sacredness of hospitality would stamp such conduct with peculiar blackness. If David wrote the psalm, the ingratitude was worse, because of the honour conferred on one who was admitted to the king's table (2 Sam. ix. 10, ff.; 1 Kings xviii. 19; 2 Kings xxv. 29). Part of this verse is quoted by our Lord in John xiii. 18, as applicable to the treacherous conduct of Judas, but with the significant omission of the words, 'Mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted;' for our Lord knew what was in Judas from the beginning, and therefore did not trust him. Nothing can be more decisive, both as to the way in which quotations were made, and also as to the proper interpretation of the apparently strong phrase, *ὅνα ἡ γράφη πληρωθῇ*, with which the quotation is introduced. First, it is plain that particular expressions in a psalm may be applicable to events which befell our Lord, whilst the whole psalm is not in like manner applicable. And next, it is evident that 'the Scripture is fulfilled,' not merely when a prediction receives its accomplishment, but when words, descriptive of certain circumstances in the life of the Old Testament saints, find a still fuller and truer realization—one not foreseen by the psalmist.

Vers. 10—12.—*He prays against his enemies.* (Cf. homily on Ps. xxxv.)—C.

Ver. 13.—*The doxology of the Hebrew Church.* This doxology does not appear to be a part of the psalm to which it is annexed. The Psalms are divided into five books. The first book closes with the forty-first psalm. In all probability this was the earliest portion of the songs of the Hebrew sanctuary; and when made up (as we should say) into a volume, the collator added thereto a doxology—as was done also at the end of Pss. lxxii., lxxxix., and cvi. Perhaps the omission of any doxology after Ps. cl. is because that psalm is entirely one of praise. We have no information as to the name of the collator, nor as to the date at which this first division of the Psalms was made up, and the doxology appended thereto. But, nevertheless, it is of no small interest, and ought to convey no mean instruction; showing us, as it does, most strikingly what *fruition* resulted from *revelation*. In pagan worship there is no delight in God; there is dread, there is homage to greatness, there is even thankfulness for a good harvest; but as for delight in God as God, there is none, and can be none, save where God has revealed himself; nor can there be any delight in adoring the Unknown, nor in the positivist's worship of humanity. Religious worship, as glad and jubilant, belongs only to those to whom God is known; paganism, whether in ancient or modern days, knows no such songs of delight or ascriptions of loving praise as those which rise up from the lips and hearts of the saints of God.

I. GOD, AS THE REVEALED GOD OF OUR SALVATION, IS THE FITTING OBJECT OF GLADSOME SONG. The declared name of God would yield delight to pious souls (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7). The various terms added to the covenant name Jehovah show how the saints rejoiced in God: Jehovah-jireh, Jehovah-rophi, Jehovah-nissi, Jehovah-tsidenku. Many expressions in the Psalms show what God was to his people—Rock, Fortress, Light, Strength, Refuge, their exceeding Joy, their Deliverer, their Sun, their Shield, pitying as a father, gentle and comforting as a mother, One who put beneath his people “everlasting arms.” Well might their joy rise to songs of rapturous delight—as in Deut. xxxii. 26—29. This joy in God would arise (1) *from what God is in himself*—as a God of power, wisdom, loving-kindness, faithfulness, pity, and love; and also (2) *from what he declared himself to be as Israel's God*—giving pardon, help, strength, guidance, light, salvation. And now that, through the larger Scriptures, through the Person of Christ, and through the baptism of the Holy Ghost, our knowledge is so much the larger, our joy should be proportionately greater, and our songs the louder and sweeter, rising to such heights as Eph. iii. 20, 21; 1 Pet. i. 3—5; Rev. i. 5, 6; v. 9—13; vii. 10; xv. 3.

II. THE GLADSOME PRAISE OF THE SAINTS IS THE REFITTING RESPONSE TO GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF. “Blessed be,” etc. Here believers have a changeless Object of delight. “From everlasting to everlasting.” “The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” The response of believers to the revelation of so glorious a Being may be looked at in two ways. 1. *As that which God desires to evoke by revealing himself.* God, being love, yearns to be loved. Divine love yearns for its object to respond, even as our need yearns for a Being to meet that need. 2. *With the Divine revelation of himself there is a power working in and on human souls, whereby such response is elicited.* A mighty host of believers, whom their God has rescued from darkness and death, are now exulting in songs of praise to the God of their salvation, acknowledging that all good is from him, that all their trust is reposed on him, that all their love centres round him, that all their strength is derived from him, and that all their hopes are fixed on him; they know that he will never leave them nor forsake them. Yea, it is the revelation of a redeeming God to which we owe the happiest hearts, the noblest songs, the grandest music, and the highest inspiration. And this song will never

yet one no less designed of God—in the circumstances of our Lord's earthly life. This will be peculiarly the case here if Ahithophel be meant; for as David was in much of his life a type of Christ, so the treachery of his trusted counsellor would be a foreshadowing of the treachery of Judas. The rendering in John xiii., “Ὁ πρῶτον μετ' ἐμοῦ τὸν ἄρτον, ἐπῆρεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ τὴν πτέρναν αὐτοῦ,” is independent of the LXX., who have here more literally, ἐμεγάλυνεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ πτερνισμόν. The Hebrew phrase is, ‘hath made great his heel,’ which may either mean, ‘he hath lifted it up on high, so as to trample on the object of attack,’ or ‘has given a hard, violent blow with it.’”

dle. First on earth, and then in heaven, the sacred will ascribe all honour to their God; while the vast redeemed host will never cease to add their grand "Amen."—C.

Vers. 1—13.—*God's poor.* There may be a good time coming, when the poor will cease out of the land; but it is not yet. The state of things in our day is much the same as in the past (Deut. xv. 11; Mark xiv. 3). God has always shown his care for the poor. Under the Law of Moses, special provisions were made for their help (cf. Deut. xv. 7—11). Besides this, there were manifold exhortations in the Psalms and prophets tending to foster a spirit of love and brotherhood. The duty of kindness to the poor is inculcated still more clearly and forcibly under the gospel. The Jews are remarkable for their charities, but they limit their care chiefly to their own poor. Christians are called to act in a more generous spirit. While we are bound to have special regard to the poor of our own blood and faith, we must not restrict our charity to them; but "do good to all" as we have opportunity, after the example and teaching of our blessed Lord. We may make use of this psalm to illustrate—

I. THE DUTY OF CARING FOR THE POOR. (Ver. 1.) "Considereth." This implies thought, insight, and practical brotherly kindness. The very fact that there are so many "poor" should arrest our attention. Surely there must be great wrong somewhere, or there could not be such inequalities and miseries. The more closely we look into the matter, the more will it be impressed upon us that we are bound to take part in remedying the evil. Circumstances and needs vary. Indiscriminate charity is bad. We cannot relieve all. Our powers are limited. We need, therefore, to act circumspectly. But whatever we do should be done in the spirit of love. Consideration without sympathy is torture (Jas. ii. 15, 16; 1 John iii. 17; Rom. xii. 10).

II. THE BLESSING PROMISED. 1. The blessing is first to *the man himself*. We cannot do good without being the better for it. Every act of true self-denial and love raises us in dignity and strength. We are "blessed in our deed" (Jas. i. 25—27). 2. There is also *the blessing of the poor*. We have helped them in the time of need. They feel that they have not been forsaken. They have still brothers and sisters who care for them, and they are grateful. It is better to have the confidence of the poor than their contempt; their gratitude than their hate; their prayers than their curses. Remember Job (Job xxix. 12). 3. Besides all this, there is *the blessing of God*. He is the God of the poor. He marks their state. He defends their rights. He provides for their relief. He counts what is done to them as if it were done to himself. The law and order of God in the world secure that a blessing will surely come to him who "considereth the poor."

III. THE DIFFICULTIES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS. We have not only the abstract, but the concrete. The doctrine is translated into fact. It seems as if the psalmist had been bringing the word home. Let each of us put himself in his place. Then we may not only consider the poor, but consider ourselves with regard to the poor. What are we, what have we done, and what has been the result? In this case there will be: 1. *Consciousness of great shortcomings in love and duty*. We have not done what we could, and what we have done we have done weakly and imperfectly. Pride and vanity and other unlovely things have mixed themselves with our best endeavours. Men may praise us, but before God we are grievous sinners. 2. There will also be *disappointments*. We should "do good, hoping for nothing again;" but few of us are so disinterested. Besides, it is reasonable to consider results. Perhaps we have "enemies," who misrepresent what we do. Or, worse still, there may be people who come to us in the guise of friendship, and profess to inquire as to what we have done—as to our plans and endeavours, and, finding out the secrets of our life, turn their knowledge to base uses. Instead of truth, they spread falsehoods. Instead of giving sympathy, they exaggerate our failures, and prate maliciously of our troubles. But there may be even a worse trial still. Our familiar friend, in whom we trusted, may turn against us (ver. 9). Amidst all such difficulties there is always encouragement. We turn to God, and find comfort. We know what he is, and what he would have us to be. We know that he will surely perform his word, and that if we are

A very thoughtful homily by Mr. Conway, on what he calls "the much-neglected word, 'Amen,'" will be found in the volume of the 'Pulpit Commentary' on the Revelation.

true, and honestly try to do our duty towards others, and especially the poor, we shall in no wise lose our reward.

Learn a lesson of *humility*, as we think of our own sins, and ill deserts; of *gratitude*, when we remember God's goodness to ourselves; of *charity*, as we consider the evil case of many of our brethren, and their claim upon us, if we are of the same mind with Christ, to help them as we can.

“The holy supper is kept indeed,  
In whatso we share with another's need;  
Not what we give, but what we share,  
For the gift without the giver is bare.  
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three—  
Himself, his hungering brother, and me.”

(Lowell.)

W. F.

**Vers. 10—12.—Influence.** This passage may suggest to us some thoughts as to influence. We have all the power of influencing others for good or for evil. This is the necessary result of our being and relationships. Our chief influence will be upon those with whom we are most closely associated; but we also influence others, often unconsciously. You cannot pay a visit, or reside for a short time in a district, without making some impression upon those you meet, and leaving them the better or the worse for having known you. There are differences as to the way people judge. Some *over-estimate* themselves. They have a high opinion of their own importance. You might think, from the way they talk, that the world could not get on without them. Others *under-estimate* themselves. They are poor, and think they can do nothing. They are modest and humble-minded, and set little value on what they can effect. Or it may be they have met with disappointments and reverses, and have lost hope. They have laboured in vain, and have not the heart to try again. It is well to remember that we have this awful power of influencing others, and while we confess our responsibility, we should be careful so to live and act as that our influence shall be for good, and not for evil; a blessing, and not a curse. How is this to be secured?

**I. BY LIVING NEAR TO GOD.** It is as God is merciful to us, and raises us up, bringing us nearer to himself, that we are able to “requite” others, not after the desire of our own evil hearts, but after the loving way of God (ver. 10; Matt. v. 45—48). Pray God, that he may set you “before his face” (ver. 13), and then as you receive his grace, you will reflect his goodness; as you rejoice in the light of his presence, you will bring sunshine into many a shady place, and hope to many a troubled heart.

**II. BY HAVING A HIGH STANDARD OF DUTY.** We must not make custom, or convenience, or the etiquette of the world, our rule, but we must learn the “perfect will of God” from Christ. The more loyal we are to our highest ideals, the more shall we gain of moral force, and the greater will be our power of doing good to others. Character settles influence. It is the salt that is good, and not the salt that has lost its savour, that is fit for use. It is the man who has the Spirit of Christ, and not the man who minds earthly things, who is the greatest force in the world. How weak was Lot as compared with Abraham!

**III. BY DOING OUR WORK FAITHFULLY IN OUR SEVERAL PLACES.** People are influenced more by what others do than by what they say. Example is better than precept. If there be a man of undoubted “integrity,” he is not only respected, but his daily life has a salutary effect upon those with whom he is associated. It is the man we trust that we are disposed to follow. How many are there who do their duty quietly and unobtrusively, and who are never heard of far from home, who yet prove a blessing in the society with which they are connected! Their lives are prayers towards God, and powers for good towards men. Virtue goes out of them, even when they know it not. God's favour is upon them, and they grow in favour with men.

**IV. BY CULTIVATION OF THE SPIRIT OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS AND LOVE.** Much depends upon the spirit that is in us, because our spirit determines our actions, and our actions are seen of men, and have their effect upon their minds. If we are proud and selfish, we cannot win the hearts of others. But if we are self-forgetful and kind,

our influence will be beneficial. There are some who try to do good, but hold themselves aloof, and their efforts are of little avail. Let us strive, therefore, to follow Christ (John xiii. 12—15) humbly, lovingly, patiently, doing good as we have opportunity, and, above all, living ourselves according to the law of godliness, and let us leave results with God.—W. F.

Vers. 1—13.—*The aggravation and consolation of bodily affliction.* Written by some mighty man, probably by David, on his recovery from an affliction during which conspiracy and slander had been active against him. It may refer to the time of Absalom; and the “familiar friend” may have been *Ahithophel*.

I. THE AGGRAVATIONS OF BODILY AFFLICTION. 1. *The consciousness of guilt.* (Ver. 4.) But he was penitent, and prayed for forgiveness and spiritual healing. 2. *The malicious conduct of enemies and false friends.* (Vers. 5—9.) At a time when we are little able to contend against them.

II. THE CONSOLATIONS OF AFFLICTION. 1. *That he had himself sympathized with sufferers.* (Ver. 1.) He had not been like the enemies and false friends whom he describes, but had been a true friend to the weak and afflicted. 2. *He is assured on this account of the Divine sympathy and deliverance.* (Vers. 1—3.) The merciful are blessed, in receiving mercy. 3. *He has already received tokens of the deliverance for which he is looking.* (Vers. 11, 12.) His enemy has not triumphed over him. God has upheld him in general right conduct, or integrity. He does not forget his particular sins (ver. 4); but he is conscious also of living in the sight of the Divine countenance, and receiving Divine help.—S.

## BOOK II.

### EXPOSITION.

#### PSALM XLII.

**THIS** psalm, committed (like so many others) to the precentor, or chief musician, for its musical setting, is entitled “*Maschil* of the sons of Korah”—*i.e.* an “instruction,” or didactic psalm, composed by the Korahite Levites—a Levitical family of singers (1 Chron. xxvi. 1, 2; 2 Chron. xx. 19). To the same family are assigned Ps. xlv.—xlix. in the present book, and Ps. lxxxiv., lxxxv., lxxxvii., and lxxxviii. in Book III. The composition, though assigned by some to the commencement of the Babylonian Captivity (Four Friends, p. 168), belongs more probably to the time of David, and the words seem put by the author into the mouth of David himself. The date of the composition is probably the year of David’s flight from Jerusalem on the revolt of Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 16), when he spent some months in the Trans-Jordanic territory, chiefly at Mahanaim (2 Sam. xvii. 24; xix. 32). The

psalm is chiefly an outpouring of sorrow and complaint; but still is an “instruction,” inasmuch as it teaches the lesson that in the deepest gulf of sorrow (ver. 7) the soul may still turn to God, and rest itself in hope on him (vers. 5, 8, 12).

There is an intimate union between this psalm and the next, which is a sort of additional stanza, terminating in the same refrain (comp. Ps. xliii. 5 with Ps. xlii. 5 and 11).

Ver. 1.—As the hart panteth after the water-brooks. Stags and hinds need abundant water, especially in hot countries, and, in time of drought, may be said, with a slight poetical licence, to “pant,” or “cry” (Joel i. 20) for it. They are still found in Palestine (Tristram, ‘Land of Israel,’ pp. 418, 447), though rather scarce. So panteth my soul after thee, O God. The “panting” of the soul does not mean any physical action, but a longing desire for a blessing that is, at any rate for a time, withheld.

Ver. 2.—My soul thirsteth for God (comp



Ps. lxxiii. 1; cxliiii. 6; Isa. lv. 1). The devout soul is always athirst for God. David felt his severance from the tabernacle and its services as a sort of severance from God himself, whom he was accustomed to approach through the services of the sanctuary (see 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26). For the living God. This title of God occurs only in one other psalm (Ps. lxxxiv. 2); but it was a title familiar to David (1 Sam. xvii. 27). It is first used in Deut. v. 26; and, later, in Josh. iii. 10; 2 Kings xix. 4, 16; Isa. xxxvii. 4, 17; Jer. x. 10; xxiii. 36; Dan. vi. 26; Hos. i. 10. It expresses a essential attribute of God that he is "the eternal Life" (1 John v. 20), the Source and Origin of all life, whether angelic, human, or animal. When shall I come and appear before God? Appearance in the tabernacle must here be specially meant, but with this David connects his return to God's favour and to the light of his countenance (2 Sam. xv. 25).

Ver. 3.—My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? (comp. Ps. lxxx. 9, "Thou feedest them with the bread of tears;" and Ovid, 'Metaph.,' x. 288, "Cum dolorque animi, lachrymaque, alimenta fuerunt"—"They who grieve deeply do not eat; they only weep;" yet they live on, so that their tears appear to be their aliment). David's grief at being shut out from God's presence is intensified by the reproaches of his enemies, "Where is thy God?" i.e. "Is he not wholly gone from thee? Has he not utterly cast thee off?" (comp. 2 Sam. xvi. 8).

Ver. 4.—When I remember these things; rather, *these things I remember*—the things remembered being those touched on in the rest of the verse—his former free access to the house of God, and habit of frequenting it, especially on festival occasions, when the multitude "kept holy day," "Deep sorrow," as Hengstenberg remarks, "tries to lose itself in the recollection of the happier past." I pour out my soul in me. "The heart pours itself out, or melts in any one, who is in a manner dissolved by grief and pain." David does not alleviate his sorrow, but aggravates it, by thinking of the happy past. "Nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi di tempo felice nella miseria" (Dante). For I had gone (rather, *how I went*) with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day (comp. 2 Sam. vi. 12—19).

Ver. 5.—Why art thou cast down? or, *Why art thou bowed down?* i.e. brought low—a term indicative of the very extreme of dejection. O my soul, The spirit, or higher reason, rebukes the "soul," or passionate nature, for allowing itself to be so depressed,

and seeks to encourage and upraise it. And why art thou so disquieted in me? rather, *Why dost thou make thy moan over me?* literally, *make a roaring noise like the sea* (comp. Ps. xlii. 3; Jer. iv. 19; v. 22). Hope thou in God (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 22; xxxix. 7, etc.). For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Another reading assimilates the refrain here to the form which it takes in ver. 11 and in Ps. xliii. 5. But, as Hengstenberg observes, Hebrew poets, and indeed poets generally, avoid an absolute identity of phrase, even in refrains (see Ps. xxiv. 8, 10; xlix. 12, 20; lvi. 4, 11, etc.).

Ver. 6.—O my God, my soul is cast down within me; or, *bowed down*, as in the first clause of ver. 5. Therefore will I remember thee. As a remedy for my depression, I will call thee to mind, and cast myself on thee. From the land of Jordan. From the place of my present abode—the Trans-Jordanic region—to which, on the revolt of Absalom, David had fled (2 Sam. xvii. 24). And of the Hermonites; rather, *and of the Hermons*. This expression is not elsewhere used, and can only be explained conjecturally. It probably means the mountain ranges which, starting from Hermon in the north, extend in a southerly direction down the entire Trans-Jordanic territory. From the hill Mizar. This name occurs nowhere else; and can be assigned to no special locality.

Ver. 7.—Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts. Blow follows blow. Misfortunes "come not in single file, but in battalions." The imagery may be taken from the local storms that visit the Trans-Jordanic territory (see Lynch, 'Expedition to the Jordan and the Dead Sea;' and Wilson, 'Negeb,' pp. 26, 27). All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me (comp. Ps. lxxix. 1, 2; lxxxviii. 7, 17; cxliv. 7).

Ver. 8.—Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime. Notwithstanding all these present woes, God will at some time "command" his loving-kindness to make itself apparent (comp. Ps. xlii. 4; lxviii. 28), and both "in the daytime" and in the night will so comfort me that his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life; i.e. I shall offer him both praise and prayer continually both day and night (Ps. cxii. 2) for his great mercies.

Ver. 9.—I will say unto God my Back (comp. Ps. xviii. 1; xxxi. 3). Why hast thou forgotten me? (see the comment on Ps. xiii. 1). God does not forget even when he most seems to forget (comp. Ps. ix. 12; xxxvii. 28). As the event showed, he had not now forgotten David (see 2 Sam. xix. 9—40). Why go I mourning because of

the oppression of the enemy? Why am I allowed to remain so long an exile, sorrowing and oppressed (comp. Ps. xliii. 2)? Even to repentant sinners God's judgments are apt to seem too severe, too much prolonged, too grievous.

Ver. 10.—As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me. The reproaches of his enemies were as daggers struck into his bones; or, according to others as blows that crushed his bones (LXX.). So keenly did he feel them. The worst of all was that they could say daily unto him, Where is thy God? What has become of him? Has he wholly forsaken thee (see above, ver. 3)?

Ver. 11.—Why art thou cast down (or, bowed down), O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him. Thus far is identical with ver. 5; but what follows is slightly different: who is the health of my countenance, and my God, instead of "for the help (health?) of his countenance." Most commentators assimilate the text in ver. 5 to that of the present verse, which can be effected by a mere alteration of the pointing; but Hengstenberg, Kay, Professor Alexander, and others regard the variant forms as preferable.

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The intense longing of the soul after God.* "My soul thirsteth," etc. Amid the trackless mountains and rugged valleys beyond Jordan, where the roaring torrents seem to answer one another from glen to glen, the heart of the pious exile turned with passionate yearning to the city and temple of God. It was, perhaps, as difficult for him to dissociate his deep spiritual yearning after God from the solemn and glorious services of the temple, as it is for us fully to realize the power and value of those services for an ancient believer. Remember that we, as Christians, have in Christ all that the Israelites had in the temple sacrifices and priesthood, and which he could find nowhere else. Nevertheless, the central inspiration of these words is the intense longing of the heart and soul after God himself.

I. THIS LONGING AFTER GOD IS THE HIGHEST AFFECTION OF WHICH HUMAN NATURE IS CAPABLE. It is so, because fixed on the highest Object, and capable of lifting human character to the highest level. What we love most both tests and moulds our character; shows what we are, and makes us such. Ignoble, foul, false, and trivial objects degrade in proportion as they attract; pure, noble, worthy objects of affection and pursuit elevate. Misdirected worship, therefore, degrades. The sincerity of the idolater's religious faith and feeling makes no amends for the degrading and polluting influence of his false creed. Heathendom offers the miserable choice of either the gross and even vicious and foul conceptions of God (or the gods) exemplified in Greek mythology and Hindu incarnations; or the shadowy, unreal, far-away ideas of philosophers, which inspire neither love nor worship, neither obedience nor trust. Contrast the psalmist's view of God—"the living God" (cf. Deut. xxxii. 40, not Revised Version). The Old Testament saint could not anticipate the full revelation of God in Christ Jesus. But the books of Moses and history of Israel carried the *personal revelation* of God as far as was possible (before the Incarnation), except as supplemented by the teaching of the prophets. The Book of Psalms is filled and inspired with the contemplation of God, as thus known—the Creator, the Author of all life, whose glory fills the heavens, his goodness the earth, his tender mercies reaching even the lowest creatures; as the righteous Judge and Lawgiver, not of Israel merely, but mankind; the Holy One, eternally opposed to sin, yet pardoning the sinner freely; the pitying Father, the only Refuge in trouble, the Hearer of prayer, the soul's true Portion. *What does the gospel add?* The manifestation of God in Jesus Christ (Col. i. 19); and revelation of God's love (1 John iv. 9, 10).

II. THIS THIRST FOR GOD IS GOD'S OWN VOICE WITHIN THE SOUL. The germ and capacity of this affection are inborn in our nature. Heathenism bears world-wide witness to men's longing for some kind of worship. But not worship of the holy, wise, righteous, loving, infinite Creator. This is *practically dead* (Rom. i. 28). The majority, even in a Christian land like this, live in careless forgetfulness of God; utterly indifferent; others (as in France) hating the very name of God. The presence, therefore, of this overmastering desire after God implies an adequate cause to awaken and maintain. No cause can be suggested but the Spirit of God quickening the

dead soul and changing enmity or indifference into love (John iii. 3, 6; 1 Cor. ii. 14 • Rom. v. 5).

III. A SEARCHING TEST OF CHARACTER AND OF SPIRITUAL LIFE IS THUS SUPPLIED. This experience is genuine, real, beyond all doubt. Therefore possible for us. With the full revelation of God in Christ, this affection ought to be both easier and more intense. *Is it ours?* If not, why? Is it from defective views of God? From secret love of what is sinful, and so indifference or antipathy to perfect holiness? Or, in many cases, neglect of meditation, study of God's Word, and communion with Christ? Note, as caution: Some natures are far colder than others, incapable of the same spiritual ardour. There may be a quiet devotion, an undemonstrative but unswerving consecration, which our Saviour accepts as the true evidence of love (John xiv. 21; xv. 14). But shall any real Christian be content without some experience of that love and longing of heart towards God, which can make a sanctuary in a desert solitude, and without which heaven itself would be no true temple?

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*Athirst for God.* This is one of the most touching, pathetic, and beautiful of the Psalms. It is not possible to decide either its author or the time of its composition. Its tones are very much like the plaintive sounds from David's harp, whether or no he was its writer (but see homily on Ps. xliii.). Leaving untouched, owing to want of space, the historical and geographical matters suggested in the psalm,<sup>1</sup> we shall devote ourselves entirely to the opening up of its deep pathos and spiritual fervour, so as to administer instruction and comfort to those saints of God who may even now be ready to say, "All thy waves and billows are gone over me," and from whom, for a while, the face of God seems to be hid. May they find help in tracing the experience of a like sufferer in the ancient days!

I. ONLY THE LIVING GOD CAN SATISFY THE CRAVINGS OF HUMAN SPIRITS. (Vers. 1, 2.) So the writer of Ps. lxxxiv. 2. The words of Augustine are well known, declaring that our hearts want rest, and cannot find it till it is found in God. There are four lines of illustration along which this thought may be worked out. 1. *In the heathen world.* There are many Corneliiuses longing for the Peters to come and tell them about God. The late Mrs. Porter, widow of a missionary at Madras, assured the writer that her husband and herself often came across instances of this sort, and said, "Oh, if Christian people did but know how men long after God, they surely would hasten to send them the news of his love!"<sup>2</sup> This yearning after God shows itself in what is best in the several religions of the world. 2. *In the worldly,* even in Christian lands. Men thirst after riches, honour, rank, etc., and yet the raging thirst of the spirit remains unquenched. Some, indeed, may have suppressed the craving till it ceases to be felt. But such numbness of feeling is not to be confounded with satisfaction. At the moment we are writing, an Italian, named Succi, is making the experiment of going without food for forty days, having made similar attempts before, though for a shorter period. He declares that after the first week no desire for food is left. But, for all that, he is a shrivelling, starving man. Will any be so foolish as to mistake the absence of desire for food for the satisfaction and sustenance of his nature? So in spiritual things, a man may trifle with the yearnings of the Spirit, till the yearning ceases. *But he wants God, for all that!* 3. *In the awakened soul,* when the first throbbings of the renewed life are felt, the desire after God becomes intelligent, clear, and strong; the soul craves its God, in whom alone it can find light, pardon, friendship, power, to the full extent of its

<sup>1</sup> For suggested historic circumstances, see Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' ch. viii. § 6, also ix. and xi.; for geographical elucidation, see Perowne's instructive notes; for a reference to the wonderful play of emotion in this and other psalms, see Irving's introductory essay to Bishop Horne on the Psalms; Perowne's second chapter in his introduction on 'The Use of the Psalter in the Church and by Individuals;' and the preface to Dr. Parker's 'Psalter,' in vol. xii. of his 'People's Bible,' although, as Dr. Parker confesses, he has left the Psalter "almost untouched," so far as exposition is concerned.

<sup>2</sup> A touching illustration will be found in M. Gode't's 'Commentaire sur l'Evangile de St. Jean,' tome troisième, p. 17, deuxième édition: Paris and London; and in the English translation of the same, vol. ii. p. 277 (Clark).

longings. 4. *In the experienced believer.* He has found God as his God, as his "exceeding Joy;" but there are times in the experience of many such when all that they have known and realized of God's love seems like a dream of the past; when the light of heaven is partially or even totally eclipsed. This may arise from bodily weakness, from overwhelming sorrows, or from mental and spiritual gloom. But let the cause be what it may, it is agony to the saint when he can neither see, nor feel, nor find his God (see Job xxiii. 3—10; also Ps. xxi. 1, and our notes thereon).

II. AT TIMES OF SORE DEPRESSION, THE BELIEVER LONGS FOR THE JOYS OF BYGONE DAYS. (Vers. 2, 4.) At the time when this psalm was penned, its writer was unable to attend the house of God. He looked back to the time when he used to accompany the throng and to lead them in procession to the sanctuary. In those days, "the Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob;" and on many grounds the worship in the courts of Zion played a very large part in the spiritual delights of the saints. And though changes of circumstance and the advance of the Divine dispensations have altered to some extent the relations between temple worship and home life, yet even now it is a sore privation to be debarred from the fellowship of saints, especially when other causes of depression are active at the same time; for in such a case the saints are shut out from the public service when they are most dependent on its helpful aid. Note: Even so, it is far better to have the heart to go and not be able, than to be able to go and not have the heart for it.

III. THE ENEMY OFTEN TAKES ADVANTAGE OF OUR TIMES OF SPECIAL WEAKNESS. (Vers. 3, 10.) "They say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" We know not who these were that could be so intensely cruel to the psalmist when they witnessed his woe. But he was not alone in his experience, though in detail the form of it with us may vary. 1. Very often the taunt of the unbeliever is equivalent to this, when we are pointed to the weaknesses and distresses of the Church, and asked—How can your Christianity be Divine, if this is allowed? And in more private ways: 2. The evil one will take advantage of our moments of distress to insinuate racking doubts. No kindly considerations will ever lead the devil to refrain from tempting us because we are weak. He seized on the Master "when he was an hungred." "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord."

IV. STILL, THE CHILDLIKE HEART MUST CRY OUT, "God!" (Vers. 1, 6, 9.) If the light of heaven is shut out, the soul will cry after it. There is a world of difference between the light being kept out because the eye is closed, and its being hidden behind a dense black cloud. And even if the strength is so feeble that the tongue cannot cry, "Father!" yet the heart will. We were once visiting a dear friend in sickness. She said, "I am so weak, I cannot think, I cannot pray, I cannot enjoy God at all." We said to her, "Your little Ada was very ill some time back, was she not?" "Very." "Was she not too ill to speak to you?" "Yes." "Did you love her less because she couldn't speak to you?" "No; I think I loved her more, if anything." Even so, when all that is possible is for the heart to yearn out, "O my God!" the loving relations between God and the saint are not for a moment disturbed.

V. AT THE DARKEST MOMENT, THERE IS REASONING WITHIN REASONING. (Vers. 5, 11.) If there be any who have not passed through any such experience as that in this psalm, these words will be wonderfully uninteresting, if not unintelligible. They baffle the logic of the intellect; but the heart has a logic and an eloquence too, that are all its own. It is cast down, and yet chides itself for being cast down. It cannot see God, cannot feel him, yet knows he is there. It is in the depths, through billow after billow rolling over it, and yet at the very moment indulges in blessed memories and hopeful faith. Such are the mazes of the soul. It can scarce understand itself; but "He knoweth our frame," with all its complicated and vexing play of doubt and chiding, of hope and fear.

VI. FROM A RIFT IN THE BLACK CLOUD THERE IS GLEAM OF SUNSHINE. (Ver. 9.) "The Lord will command his loving-kindness," etc. Then all is not lost. The saint may be "perplexed, yet not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." Here is a fine group of words for a man to take upon his lips: "Jehovah;" "loving-kindness in the daytime;" "in the night, a song;" "the God of my life." Downcast soul, take heart. If all these words are true, take heart. The eclipse will soon be over. He whose face is as yet concealed will soon be revealed.

VII. FOR THE WHOLE OF THIS MOANING CRY IS ONE CONTINUOUS PRAYER. Though not every sentence is in orderly petition, yet the outgoing of the soul in this psalm is one prayer from beginning to end. And however broken the prayer may be, it is real, it is intense, it is wrung out of the necessities of a living soul. And such a prayer, with all its ruggedness and brokenness, is infinitely better than one of those orderly, cold, lukewarm petitions which come from no suffering, and cry for no relief. Far better to hear a man who prays as if he had something to pray for, than one who prays as if he must pray for something. For note: Those who have gone down to the lowest depths in suffering and humiliation will be led up to the noblest heights of gladness and of honour. Our God never did, never will, never can, desert the soul that leans on him. We are never in a surer or safer position than when, deep in sorrow and care, deserted by friends, slighted by neighbours, taunted by foes, we, in loneliness of spirit, look up to God, and to God alone. Who shall separate us from his love? Let our earthly sorrows now be what they may—

“He who has loved us bears us through,  
And makes us more than conquerors too!”

O.

Vers. 1—11.—*Spiritual depression.* The scene of this psalm seems to have been on the other side of Jordan, near the shining heights of Hermon. Here we may imagine the writer, probably a Hebrew exile, straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of the dear land of his fathers that was soon to pass from his sight. To him it seemed as if to be separated from Jerusalem was to be separated from God; as if losing the fellowship of the saints were losing God. The hart panting for the water-brooks imaged the grief of his heart athirst after God. The Jordan with its whirling rapids, “deep calling unto deep,” reflected the tumults of his soul, and reminded him of his distance from home and from the house of God. But he encourages himself by meditation and prayer, and the hope of better times. We may take the psalm as a picture of spiritual depression.

I. THE GODLY MAN CAST DOWN. His trouble does not arise from outward causes; it is within, it is from the absence of God. There were still faith, affection, the going forth of his whole being toward God in love and desire; but there seemed to be no response. Like the hart, hard pressed by the hunters, “the big tears rolling from his eyes, and the moisture standing black upon his side,” and panting for the water-brooks, his soul thirsted, but thirsted in vain, for God. His sorrows were increased by the taunts of scoffers and the remembrance of happier times (vers. 3, 4). Repulsed on all sides and lonely, and feeling as if God had forsaken him, he is in sore trouble, and his own heart sadly echoes the cry of his enemies, “Where is now thy God?” Such experiences are not uncommon. We all know what it is to “thirst;” but what do we thirst after? Is it gain, or pleasure, or worldly honours, or such-like? If so, our thirst will not be satisfied. But if we have been quickened by the Spirit, we cannot but thirst after God. He and he alone can supply our need and satisfy our hearts. And if we “thirst for God,” let us remember that this implies far more than longing for outward ordinances and joys which for a season we have lost. We are persons, and want a personal God. We are living souls, and crave a living God. We love truth and justice and goodness, and therefore we cry after the eternal God, in whom all truth and justice and goodness dwell. There will come to us, as to others, times of trial, days of darkness, when God seems afar off and silent. But let us not be cast down with overmuch sorrow. “The feeling of forsakenness is no proof of being forsaken. Mourning an absent God is an evidence of love as strong as rejoicing in a present one.” With God, for us to desire is to have; and to hunger and thirst is to be filled.

II. THE GODLY MAN COMFORTED. “Why?” This question is first of all addressed to the soul. There is self-interrogation. This is good. When we ask, “Why?” this sets us to inquire as to the reason of things. Light will arise. We may see that the cause of depression is not in God, but in ourselves. For us to abide in this state is unreasonable, contrary to our past experiences, and inconsistent with God’s mercy and truth. We can therefore call upon ourselves to cast out fear, and still to hope in God as our God and our Redeemer. But though something has been gained in this way, it is not enough. Old foes rise up, and beat down the soul into the deep waters, where

the tumult drowns the voice of mercy, and the billows rising higher and higher threaten us with total engulfment. The cry now takes a nobler form. It is not to the soul, but to God (ver. 6). Mark that there is *hope*. This points to coming good. Further, it is *hope in God*. This gives rest. Our own feelings vary. We cannot get comfort from them. Neither can we rely upon past experiences. We may deceive ourselves. Nor can we of ourselves change the circumstances which cause us pain. But the living God is a sure Refuge. He cannot change. He is more stable than the everlasting hills. This hope in God also opens up to us a way from the darkness into the bright future. "I shall yet praise him." At last it rises to full assurance, and the joy of inviolable and everlasting possession, "My God."—W. F.

Ver. 6.—"*The hill Mizar*." Association is a potent factor in life. Here it may have worked by contrast. "Mizar," as a little hill, may have called to the mind of David, in exile, the mountains of Judah, and the far-off land of his fathers and his God. We may take "Mizar" to illustrate—

I. THE CHANGES OF LIFE. As with David, so with us, changes come. We may have rest or be compelled to wander. We may have the joys of home or we may be doomed to solitude and to exile. Wherever we are, let us "remember" God (Ps. lvi. 8; Dan. ix. 3, 4).

II. THE RESTING-PLACES OF LIFE. We may be weary and sad, but God is able to give us comfort. Seated on some "Mizar," we may rest and be thankful. Looking back, there is much to awaken, not only our penitence, but our praise. Looking on, there is much to inspire us with hope. There are heights before us to be won. Let us press on with renewed courage.

III. THE SACRED MEMORIES OF LIFE. The noblest and most inspiring associations are those connected with God. Jacob had Bethel, Moses had the burning bush, Daniel the lions' den. So we too may have our holy places, to remember with gratitude and love and hope. The thought of what God has been to us leads us to remember what we should be to God. Past kindnesses and deliverances assure us of continued favour. Let us walk worthy of our high calling.

IV. THE UNDYING HOPES OF LIFE. Whatever happens, God is with us. He does not change. His purposes and his love are the same now as in the past. From our "Mizar" let us say, "I will remember thee." Thus "Mizar" may be to us as "the Delectable Mountains" to the pilgrims, and though it be little in itself, by faith it may enable us to gaze upon the way before us with hope, and to gain glimpses of the glorious land which, though far off, is yet near, where we shall see the King in his beauty, and serve him in love for ever and ever.

"Not backward are our glances bent,  
But onward to our Father's house."

W. F.

Ver. 1—Ps. xliii. 5.—*Remonstrance of the spiritual man against the natural man*. Supposed to be written by some king or priest on his way into exile, perhaps somewhere in the region of Mount Hermon. It is the remonstrance of the spiritual man within him against the despondency of the natural man.

I. THE CAUSES OF HIS DESPONDENCY. 1. *An unsatisfied longing for God*. He was being carried away from the temple to a land of heathen idolaters, and this aroused in him an intense longing for some manifestation of God which should deliver him from such a calamity. As the hunted stag pants for the watercourses, so he pants for the living God. 2. *His enemies reproach him with being forsaken of God*. (Ver. 3.) And he can only answer them with tears. His adverse circumstances seem to warrant the reproach; for he sees no prospect at present of a Divine deliverance. They were like Job's comforters. Spiritual calamity the greatest of all calamities. 3. *He remembers with anguish the religious privileges he has lost*. (Ver. 4.) In former days he had gone up with the pilgrim-processions to worship at Jerusalem, to keep holy day; and now he was going in a very different procession away from Jerusalem, as a captive to Babylon, and he is filled with bitter sorrow. Worship and fellowship with God the very air that he breathed.

II. HOW HE ATTEMPTS TO CONQUER HIS DESPONDENCY. 1. *In the repeated question "Why?" he remonstrates with himself for yielding to it.* As if it was only his *lower self* that was giving way, his higher self was braving itself to courage and strength. 2. *He comforts himself with the everlasting resource of the soul.* He hopes in God; for God is still the Health of his countenance and his God, who will show his loving-kindness in the open day of his favour, and give him songs of praise in the night of adversity. This is a hope that springs into the highest regions of faith. 3. *He anticipates with assurance a time when he shall praise God for his deliverance.* (Vers. 5, 11.) Here again is unconquerable faith, which refuses to believe that God will abandon him, though now he has lost the evidence of his presence. Even Christ cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—S.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM XLIII.

THE close connection of this psalm with the preceding has been already noticed (see the introduction to Ps. xlii.). We must not, however, suppose an accidental detachment. Rather Ps. xliii. is a supplementary stanza, added subsequently by the same or a different writer. Being intended as a continuation, the psalm has naturally no title.

Ver. 1.—Judge me, O God (comp. Ps. xxxv. 24). And plead my cause (so in Ps. xxxv. 1). God's intervention is asked in the struggle between David and his enemies, on the assumed ground that he is in the right, and not they. God will, of course, only interpose if this is so. Against an ungodly nation; or, *an unkind, unloving nation*. Though called "J," as in Isa. i. 4, still Israel is meant. They were "unloving," both towards God and towards their king. O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. Either Absalom or Ahithophel may be meant; or "man" may be used abstractedly for David's enemies generally.

Ver. 2.—For thou art the God of my strength; *i.e.* the God in whom is all my strength (Ps. xxviii. 7). Why dost thou cast me off? An equivalent to the "Why hast thou forgotten me?" of Ps. xlii. 9. Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Repeated, with the variation of a single word, from Ps. xlii. 9.

Ver. 3.—O send out thy light and thy truth (Ps. xl. 11; lvii. 3, where, however, "mercy" (חסד) and truth" take the place of "light and truth"). Both words equally signify God's favour. Let them lead me. As the pillar of fire and of the cloud led

the Israelites into the promised land, so let God's "light and truth" now lead David back to Jerusalem and God's "holy hill of Zion." Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles; or, *thy dwelling-place*. In his exile it was David's most earnest desire to revisit the tabernacle which he had set up on Mount Zion, where God's presence dwelt, and prayer was most acceptably offered (see 2 Sam. xv. 25; Ps. xlii. 2). He had made his being brought back to it a test of the return of God's favour (2 Sam. xv. 25, 26).

Ver. 4.—Then will I go unto the altar of God. As the special place where thanksgiving ought to be made, and sacrifices offered (see 2 Sam. vi. 17; 1 Chron. xvi. 1). Unto God my exceeding Joy; literally, *unto God the gladness of my exultation*. Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. The psalmist has before him some such scene as that depicted in 2 Sam. vi. and 1 Chron. xv. 25—29, where, amid shouts and singing and dancing, and "with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, with psalteries and harps," a joyful procession approached the tabernacle, David himself taking part in it.

Ver. 5.—Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. The refrain of Ps. xlii. 11 is here repeated *totidem verbis*; and the plaint of the exiled monarch is brought to an end. The burden of the refrain is hope and confidence. Notwithstanding the woes of the present, the writer has no doubt in respect of the future; he will yet have occasion to "praise" God, whom he feels to be "*his* God"—his Health and Salvation.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 4.—"God my exceeding Joy." As the Bible teems with thoughts which never would have entered men's minds without Divine teaching, so also of feelings, which,

had they not been real, men would never have aspired or pretended to. Among these is that "exceeding joy" in God which the text expresses (see margin). If it be true that "the fleshly heart is enmity against God," then this joy must be supernatural. But not *unnatural*. Only because man is fallen can it ever be *natural* to him to forget God, to be careless about his Maker. This joy is the returning of the heart to its original key-note.

I. THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS JOY. On account: 1. Of all that God is in himself—his glorious perfection. 2. Of all that he is to us—to mankind; to his people; to each believer personally. "O God, my God!" We can say this, as Christians, with fuller knowledge, more glorious warrant. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. HINDRANCES TO THIS JOY. 1. Poor, unworthy thoughts of God. 2. Forgetfulness, equivalent to *temporary unbelief*. 3. A murmuring, unthankful, discontented spirit, underrating our mercies and overrating or rebelling against our trials. 4. Sin.

III. SHALL WE SAY THE RARITY OF THIS JOY? Let each one judge. At all events, its unspeakable desirableness. Both for the happiness and the usefulness of it; a powerful motive to holiness; a witness to others for God (Pss. xxxiv. 8; lvi. 16).

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*God the salvation of the countenance; or, a light heart makes a bright face.* Dr. Binnie remarks, "The forty-second and forty-third [psalms] (which go together), were almost certainly written by the Korahites who accompanied David in his flight beyond the Jordan during Absalom's rebellion."<sup>1</sup> Nearly all modern critics consider that this and the preceding psalm formed originally but one.<sup>2</sup> So the similarity of Pss. xlii. 5, 11 and xliii. 5 would suggest. There is a variation between some of the expressions in the former and those in the latter; but there is nothing in this psalm which needs elaborate explanation. There is, however, an expression in both of them, which contains in itself a doctrine of amazing depth, one of which thousands of living believers are perpetual illustrations and proofs, though, as a doctrine, it receives far too little notice. The doctrine is connected with *the religion of the face*, and is this—that when Divine light shines in the soul of man, it will cause a radiance all its own to beam from the countenance; that God is indeed the salvation of a man's features. An Irishman was once asked what made him look so happy after his conversion. "Oh," he said, "Christ lightens our hearts, and then he brightens our face." As Dickson quaintly remarks hereon, "As when the Lord withdraweth both the outward tokens of his favour and his inward consolation for a time, the countenance of the godly cannot but be heavy, cast down, and look sad, like a man that is sick; so when God returneth to comfort and to own his own, either both inwardly and outwardly, or inwardly only, the man's face looketh cheerful: *he is the health of my countenance.*"<sup>3</sup> The Rev. Joseph Cook, of Boston, U.S., in a remarkable lecture on Solar Self-Culture, says, "There is only one form of culture that gives supremacy, and that is the form which produces the solar look; and the solar look comes only from the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. It may be incontrovertibly proved, by the coolest induction from fixed natural law, that the highest culture must be that through which the solar look shines, and that this look is possible only when there exists in the soul glad self-surrender to the innermost holiest of Conscience. In that innermost holiest Christianity finds a personal Omnipotence."<sup>4</sup> We are all familiar enough, indeed, with the generally admitted fact that the face is

<sup>1</sup> 'The Psalms, their History, Teaching and Use,' by Wm. Binnie, D.D., new edit., 1886, p. 72. Dr. Binnie has a most interesting chapter on "David's Ordinances for the Service of Song," pp. 58—76.

<sup>2</sup> 'Variorum Bible,' *in loc.*

<sup>3</sup> 'A Brief Explanation of the Psalms,' by Rev. David Dickson. There is no date to the book, but the author died in 1662. His life, by Wodrow, is dated 1726.

<sup>4</sup> 'Boston Monday Lectures,' by the Rev. Jos. Cook, 2nd series, pp. 148, *et seq.*: Dickinson.



an index of character, but the truths underlying that fact demand from us closer attention than is sometimes given thereto.

I. IT IS AN ORDINANCE OF GOD, THAT IN A WAY EITHER OF MERCY OR OF JUDGMENT, THE FACE SHOULD BE THE INDEX OF THE SOUL. When Moses had been on the mount, communing with God, his face shone. When Hannah had laid her burden before God, her countenance was no more sad. When Stephen was before the council, in the midst of hostile, angry men, his face was as the face of an angel. The late devout Samuel Martin, of Westminster, had a face so radiant through fellowship with God, that when a friend had called on him with Dean Stanley, the dean remarked afterwards, "I am glad you took me to call there; I have seen the face of an angel." The truth that communion with God lights up the face is recognized by Dante, who, speaking of Beatrice, says—

" . . with such gladness, that God's love  
Seem'd from her visage shining."

(Carey's Dante, p. 497 : H. G. Bohn.)

To work out this thought on its darker side would be as terrible as on its brighter side it is enchanting. How are some faces that once bid fair to be beautiful, spoilt by the deeply graven lines of vice and crime! Our present theme puts before us, however, the brighter side, and it is one on which we may well love to linger. For note further—

II. THAT THE DEVOUT SOUL LOVES TO COMMUNE WITH GOD. The whole of Psa. xlii. and xliii. shows us this. And the experience of believers is perpetually verifying this; in prayer there is an upward look of the whole being. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul;" "Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God;" "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills." And in this uplooking of the man there is an entirely different set of mental and spiritual powers and energies at work than when the habit of looking downward or around, or even the habit of not looking at all, is in exercise. The soul is in communion with the best and dearest of Friends, enjoying a luxury of fellowship with which a stranger cannot intermeddle.

III. WHEN THE SOUL THUS COMMUNES WITH GOD, GOD SENDS HIS GIFTS DOWN INTO THE SOUL. God reveals himself within, and makes us full of joy with his countenance; and in revealing himself he brings with him purity, peace, and power; and when such privilege is realized, the outer discomforts of life are forgotten in a joy unspeakable and full of glory. The temptations of the evil one cease to have power when God is near; the heaviest toil can be undertaken, and the weightiest cross be carried with cheerfulness and even with song; and since by the law of association we grow like those we love most, we, beholding the glory of the Lord, shall be *changed into the same image*, from glory to glory!

IV. THE EFFECT OF ALL THIS WILL BE THE SALVATION OF THE FACE. Such is the remarkable expression in Ps. xliii. 5; it is translated, "the health of my countenance;" literally it is, "the salvation of my face." Even so Christ is—is now—the Saviour of the body, and in the emancipation of the spirit from sin he is redeeming the face from ignoble marks and traits. How often have we known a man's face marvellously changed at his conversion, not by evolution, but by regeneration. "He doesn't look like the same man!" is an exclamation often heard. A well-known minister was converted while preaching. Such a radiance *instantly* shone into his face, that an enthusiastic Methodist jumped up and exclaimed, "The parson's converted! The parson's converted!" A brave Scotch soldier, whose countenance rarely wore a smile, and from whose lips never a word was heard as to his personal religion, suddenly beheld the glory of the words, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" and as suddenly radiance gleamed from his face, the padlock fell off his lips, and he exclaimed, "I've Christ by the hand! I've Christ by the hand!" And in his second volume the Rev. J. G. Paton, writing of a convert from heathenism, says, "His once sullen countenance became literally bright with inner light" (p. 217). See also 'Leaves from my Note-book,' by Rev. Wm. Haslam (1890), p. 99. All the spiritual gifts which God bestows—joy, peace, purity, strength—will find corresponding expression in the lines and features of the countenance, giving demonstrative evidence of the present power of Divine grace even over the body, and yielding no dim prophetic

forecast of the day when Christ shall alter the fashion of our bodies of humiliation, and transform them to the fixed type of his body of glory. Hence throughout the Book of Revelation, the purity of the blessed is indicated by their being robed in white, i.e. not the whiteness of snow, but the brightness of the star. If even here, with such partial sanctification, the bodily change is so great, what will it be when the purifying and glorifying processes are complete—when every soul will be full of love, and every face will be a perfect index of the soul? How beautiful must faces be when perfect love is reflected therefrom!

V. THE SUBJECT IS NOT ONLY ONE OF GREAT DOCTRINAL INTEREST; IT IS ALSO FRAUGHT WITH DEEP PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE. 1. Let us cultivate the habit of observation, and make a religious study of the human face. The holiest men will never be mistaken for hardened atheists. 2. Let us each seek to realize the duty of letting the face speak for God. And it will, if we are constantly in talk with God. His peace, his purity, his power, imparted to the soul within, will certainly make their mark without. 3. Let the young take care of their faces. God made them to be beautiful, not with that beauty which is no deeper than the skin, but with the "beauty of holiness." Be true. Love and follow the right. Live to please God. In all your troubles speak to God. And your face will show the result; for God will be the "health of" your "countenance." Amen.—C.

Vers. 1—5.—*Strengthening the heart in God.* What Jonathan did for David when he went to him into the wood of Ziph, David does here for himself—he strengthens his heart in God (1 Sam. xxiii. 16). "Hope in God." We learn here that—

I. HOPE IS BASED ON GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF. We only know God as he is pleased to make himself known to us. In his works and in his Word we find the same character. The lesson comes to us from all sides that God is true, and that his laws should be trusted. Therefore we feel safe in putting ourselves in line with his will; in wholly surrendering ourselves to his guidance and keeping. Whatever may have been dark or dim in ancient days is now made clear in Christ. He hath revealed the Father. Therefore we say to our heart, "Hope in God."

II. HOPE IS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE RIGHTEOUS. We cannot hope in God till we are reconciled to God. Hope is not a chance thing, but born of faith. We cannot hope in God but as we are of the same mind with God. Hope is not an easy thing, but requires the putting forth of our own strength and will. "Like the highest forms of courage, it is a refusal to be borne down and cowed and depressed by evil—a refusal to indulge in the melancholy pleasure of looking and dwelling on the dark side of things." This is an achievement possible only to the righteous, who not only have faith in God, but are able to enlist imagination in aid of faith (Joel iii. 16; 1 Pet. i. 21).

III. HOPE IN GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO THE RIGHT DISCIPLINE OF LIFE. All kinds of trials come to us. There are troubles without and fears within. There are mistakes we cannot correct, losses we cannot repair, evils to ourselves and others sore to see, but sorer still because they cannot be remedied. Enemies rise up against us (ver. 1). Our hearts are ready to fail for fear, and "for looking after those things which are coming." What are we to do? Shall we give way to despondency, and cry, like Jacob, "All these things are against me"? or shall we let Hope have her perfect work in calming and sustaining our souls? The answer is clear, "Hope in God." Thus we gain strength (ver. 2); thus we secure guidance. God's good angels of "light" and "truth" will lead us in the right way (ver. 3). Thus our path will be onward and upward, nearer to the serene heights and the pure air of heaven, where all is peace and love (ver. 4).

IV. HOPE IN GOD IS A SURE PROPHECY OF THE GOOD TIME COMING. Every hope is in a sense a prophecy. But often the prophecy is false. Bright gleams the vision in the distance, but nearer approach and closer scrutiny prove that it is a delusion and a snare. It is like the mirage, which leaves the desert all the barer and the gloomier when it fades into the light of common day. But it is otherwise with the Christian's hope. It is real. It stands inquiry. It verifies itself by the moral effects which it produces. All the future, onward into the vast eternal spaces, is covered by it; and every fulfilment is but the earnest and foreshadowing of the more perfect fulfilments yet

to come. "Christ in us the Hope of glory!" "Thus living, eternal life is begun in our hearts; thus and thus only, under the teaching and moulding of the Divine Regenerator of our nature, does the heavenly life in time anticipate and herald and prepare for, and, blending with it, at last is lost in, the life of heaven for eternity" (Archer Butler).—W. F.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM XLIV

THE date and occasion of this psalm are greatly disputed. Most critics, from Calvin to Hitzig, refer it to the times of the Maccabees. Others suggest the fourth or fifth century B.C. One (Tholnuk) dates it in the reign of Jehoiachin. Hengstenberg and Canon Cook argue for the reign of David. The time of Jehoram (2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17) and that of the defeat of Josiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 20—24) have also been proposed as possible. The Davidic date receives a certain amount of support from Ps. lx., which is in the same tone, and resembles the present psalm in several expressions (comp. Ps. lx. 1 with xlv. 9; lx. 10 with xlv. 9, 10; lx. 11 with xlv. 26; etc.). It also harmonizes with the place of the psalm in the Psalter, and with its ascription to the "sons of Korah," who were certainly among David's musicians.

The occasion of the psalm is some serious reverse which the Israelites had sustained in a war with foreign enemies, but who were the enemies, and when exactly the reverse was sustained, are uncertain. No doubt there were many temporary reverses in the course of David's wars, after one of which the psalm may have been written.

The psalm divides itself into four parts. In part i. (vers. 1—8) the writer recounts God's mercies in the past, and from them confidently concludes that effectual help will be granted in the present emergency. In part ii. (vers. 9—16) he describes the emergency itself. In part iii. (vers. 17—22) he urges the fact that it had not been brought about by any infidelity or rebellion on the part of his countrymen. And in part iv. (vers. 23—26) he makes his prayer for deliverance.

The style is throughout simple, pure, and noble, possessing all the characteristics of the best period of Hebrew poetry

Ver. 1.—We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work

thou didst in their days, in the times of old. The Law required all Israelites to teach their children the past history of the nation, and especially the meritorious which had been vouchsafed to it (see Exod. x. 2; xii. 26, 27; xiii. 8, 10, etc.).

Ver. 2.—How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand; *i.e.* "by thy power." The conquest of Canaan is the historical fact referred to. And plantedst them (comp. Exod. xv. 17, "Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance;" and see also Ps. lxxx. 8, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it"). How thou didst afflict the people; rather, *the peoples*, *i.e.* the Canaanitish nations. And cast them out. So the LXX., the Vulgate, and even the Revised Version. But most moderns, understanding "them" of Israel, render, *but didst spread them out* (comp. Ps. lxxx. 11).

Ver. 3.—For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them (comp. Josh. xxiv. 11, 12); but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them (see Deut. iv. 37, 38; Josh. xxiv. 11, 18).

Ver. 4.—Thou art my King, O God; literally, *thou art he that is my King, O God*; *i.e.* I acknowledge no other king but thee, no other absolute lord and master. Command deliverances for Jacob. Being King, thou hast a right to command. We pray thee at this present time to command our deliverance.

Ver. 5.—Through thee will we push down our enemies. Do as we ask—command our deliverance—and then we shall assuredly "push down," *i.e.* overthrow and prostrate, our enemies. Thy help will be found as effectual in the future as in the past. Through thy Name will we tread them under that rise up against us. Having pushed our foes to the ground (comp. Deut. xxxiii. 17), we shall then be able to "tread them under." The imagery is drawn from the practice of buffaloes and wild bulls.

Ver. 6.—For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me (comp. ver. 3). My trust, *i.e.*, shall not be in myself, but in thee. The sword and the bow were the ordinary weapons of Israel.

Ver. 7.—But thou hast saved us from our enemies; or, *dost save us*. It is the voice of

confident hope that speaks, not that of gratitude. And hast put them to shame that hated us; rather, *and putteth them to shame that hate us*. The writer is sure that God will do in the future as he has done in the past, and will raise Israel up again from the low estate into which they have been brought by disaster.

Ver. 8.—In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy Name for ever. We boast of God as *our* God, who saves *us*, and puts to shame our enemies (see ver. 7).

Vers. 9—16.—These verses form the second stanza, and are a loud and bitter complaint. God has recently dealt with Israel exceptionally—has seemed to “cast them off,” has “put them to shame,” allowed them to be defeated and despoiled, slain and carried into captivity, made a scorn and a derision, a reproach and a byword. He no longer “goes forth with their armies,” to secure them victory over their foes, but holds aloof, and covers them with confusion. The description implies, not a single defeat, but a somewhat prolonged period of depression, during which several “armies” have been beaten, several battles lost, multitudes slain, and great numbers carried away captive (ver. 11). Still, a general captivity, like the Babylonian, is certainly not spoken of. The nation is as yet unconquered. It needs but a return of God’s favour to turn the vanquished into the victors, and to replace shame by boasting.

Ver. 9.—But thou hast cast off (comp. Ps. xliii. 2) and put us to shams (see also ver. 16). It is the *shame* of defeat, rather than the physical pains or material losses, that grieve the writer. And goest not forth with our armies. Israel has still “armies” at her disposal. It is therefore certainly not the early Maccabean period, nor the time of the expiring monarchy. Her armies have free play, are sent forth, only God does not “go forth” with them (comp. Ps. lx. 10).

Ver. 10.—Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy. Thou bringest it to pass that we turn our backs in shameful flight from the enemy, either making a feeble resistance or none at all. And they which hate us spoil for themselves. Spoil us of our arms and ornaments, which they seize and appropriate.

Ver. 11.—Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat. “As sheep for the shambles” (Kay)—a free translation, which well expresses the meaning. And hast scattered us among the heathen. Either “caused us to disperse ourselves among our

heathen neighbours,” or “to be sold for slaves among them by our captors.” No general dispersion of the nation is intended.

Ver. 12.—Thou sellest thy people for nought; literally, *for not-wealth* (comp. Jer. xv. 13). The whole people is regarded, not as sold for slaves, but as delivered over to the will of their enemies; and all “for nought,” God gaining nothing in exchange. Thou dost not increase thy wealth by their price. A repetition for the sake of emphasis, but adding no new idea.

Ver. 13.—Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours (comp. Ps. xlii. 10; lxix. 4; lxxx. 6). They would be reproached, not so much as cowards, or as weak and powerless themselves, but rather as having a weak and powerless God (comp. 2 Kings xviii. 33—35; xix. 12). A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. (For instances of the “scorn and derision” whereto the Israelites were exposed at the hands of the heathen, see 2 Kings xviii. 23, 24; xix. 23, 24; Neh. ii. 19; iv. 2, 3; Ps. lxxix. 4; cxxxvii. 7.)

Ver. 14.—Thou makest us a byword among the heathen (comp. Job xvii. 6; Jer. xxiv. 9). A shaking of the head among the people; rather, *among the peoples* (comp. Ps. xxii. 7).

Ver. 15.—My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me (see the comment on ver. 9).

Ver. 16.—For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth. The reproaches of the heathen were most commonly “blasphemies,” since they consisted very mainly of contemptuous expressions against the God of Israel (see the comment on ver. 13; and comp. Isa. xxxvii. 3, 23). By reason of the enemy and avenger. The persons by whom the blasphemous reproaches were uttered—Israel’s enemies bent on avenging former losses and defeats.

Vers. 17—22.—In this third stanza the psalmist strongly emphasizes his complaint by maintaining that the calamities from which they are suffering have not come upon the people through any fault of their own, or been in any way provoked or deserved. He is, perhaps, over-confident; but we cannot doubt that he is sincere in the belief, which he expresses, that the people, both before and during their calamities, have been obedient and faithful to God, wholly free from idolatry, and exemplary in their conduct and life. There are not many periods of Israelite history at which such a description could have been given without manifest untruth, and the time of David is certainly more suitable for it than almost any other.

Ver. 17.—All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Israel had neither put aside the thought of religion, and given herself up to wordliness, nor yet, while still professedly religious, transgressed habitually God's commandments. She maintained "thorough sincerity in religion, and consistent integrity of life." Yet "all this"—all that has been described in vers. 9—16—had come upon her.

Ver. 18.—Our heart is not turned back; i.e. turned away from God, as it was when they passed through the wilderness (Ps. lxxviii. 41). Neither have our steps declined from thy way. Neither in respect of inward feeling nor of outward act have we strayed from the right path.

Ver. 19.—Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons; rather, *in the place of jackals*; i.e. in wild and desolate regions, where jackals abound (comp. Isa. xiii. 22; xxiv. 13). The expression is probably used metaphorically. And covered us with the shadow of death. Brought us, i.e., into imminent peril of destruction (see vers. 10, 11).

Ver. 20.—If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out (rather, *spread out*) our hands to a strange god. If Israel had either forgotten the true God (see above, ver. 17) or fallen away to the worship of false or strange gods—then her ill success against her foreign enemies would have been fully accounted for, since it would only have been in accordance with the threatenings of the Law (Lev. xxvi. 14—17; Deut. xxviii. 15—23); but as she had done neither of these things, her defeats and depressed condition seemed to the psalmist wholly unaccountable. We trace here the same current belief, which comes out so strongly in the Book of Job—the belief that calamities were, almost of necessity, punishments for sin; and that when they occurred, and there had been no known precedent misconduct, the case was abnormal and extraordinary.

Ver. 21.—Shall not God search this out? i.e. visit for it—punish it. Such a result was to be expected. But when there had been no precedent idolatry, no neglect of the worship of Jehovah, what then? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Secret idolatry would, of course, explain the state of things; but the writer evidently knows of no secret idolatry.

Ver. 22.—Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; or, *continually*, as the phrase is often translated. Not only are the Israelites not suffering on account of any previous desertion of God, or other mis-

conduct, but they are suffering for their fidelity to God. The heathen hate them, and make war upon them, as worshippers of one exclusive God, Jehovah, and contempters of their many gods, whom they hold to be "no-gods." They are martyrs, like the Christians of the early Church (see Rom. viii. 36). We are counted as sheep for the slaughter (comp. ver. 11).

Vers. 23—26.—The appeal to God is now made, after the case has been fully represented. God has always hitherto maintained the cause of his people, and given them victory over their enemies, unless they had fallen away from him (vers. 1—8). Now he has acted otherwise—he has allowed their enemies to triumph (vers. 9—16). And they have given him no reason for his desertion of them (vers. 17—22). Surely, if they call upon him, and plead their cause before him, he will relent, and come to their aid. The appeal, therefore, is made briefly, but in the most moving terms.

Ver. 23.—Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? The psalmist does not really believe that Jehovah "sleeps." The heathen might so imagine of their gods (1 Kings xviii. 27), but not an Israelite. An Israelite would be sure that "he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps" (Ps. cxxi. 4). The writer consciously uses an anthropomorphism, really intending only to call on God to rouse himself from his inaction, and lay it aside, and come to Israel's aid. Arise (see Ps. vii. 6; ix. 19; x. 12, etc.). Cast us not off for ever (comp. ver. 9). Under the existing peril, for God to cast off his people will be to cast them off for ever. They had no strength of their own that could save them.

Ver. 24.—Wherefore hidest thou thy face? (comp. Ps. xiii. 1; xxvii. 9; lxix. 17, etc.). And forgettest our affliction and our oppression? (see Ps. xiii. 1; lxxiv. 19).

Ver. 25.—For our soul is bowed down to the dust; i.e. brought very low, humbled as it were, to the earth, so weakened that it has no strength in it. Our belly cleaveth unto the earth. The body participates in the soul's depression, and lies prostrate on the ground.

Ver. 26.—Arise for our help; literally, *arise as a help unto us*; i.e. arise, and come to our aid. Help against the enemy is the one object of the entire prayer. And redeem us; or, *save us*—"deliver us" (comp. Ps. xxv. 22). For thy mercies' sake (comp. Ps. vi. 4; xxxi. 16).

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The blessing of memory: a commemoration sermon.* "We have heard," etc. Memory is the thread which binds life together. A failing memory is one of the saddest infirmities of old age. Yet there is often this compensation—that the long-distant past is well remembered. The old man forgets what weather it was yesterday, but the sunny birthdays and snowy Christmas Days of childhood live in his memory. The old house, the old faces and voices, the old joys and sorrows, the lessons that sank into his heart in childhood are with him still. Suppose the reverse possible—that one had a clear memory of even the least occurrences of the last few weeks or months, but no memory of things long ago; no associations clinging, binding him to old scenes, old friends; not so much as an old prejudice;—what a shallow, mechanical, uninteresting life his would be! There are common memories as well as individual; household words, family traditions, public and national history, sacred heritages of former generations. One of the most precious possessions of mankind is the knowledge and remembrance of the past.

I. THE DUTY AND BENEFIT OF REMEMBERING THE PAST is taught in the most impressive way in the Bible. Its whole structure is historical. Alone among books, it professes to trace an unbroken line of family history from the first human being to the beginning of the Christian era; ending in him who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Its deepest and greatest lessons are bound up with the lives, the examples, the prayers, the spiritual experience of men who loved and feared God thousands of years ago. What could make up for the loss, if we could forget the faith of Abraham, the Laws of Moses, the Psalms of David? But the lives of these and other spiritual heroes are but links in the history of a great spiritual community—the Church of God. Christians, St. Paul tells us, are children of Abraham. The gospel itself is history. Our Saviour consecrated this principle when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

II. FORGETFULNESS OF THE PAST MEANS IGNORANCE OF GOD'S DEALINGS. His most wonderful works and glorious manifestations. The great law of God's creation, providence, and grace is that the present grows out of the past, and is the root and seed of the future. The watchword of modern philosophy, "*evolution*," has been used as a sort of conjuring word to get rid of God; to show how the universe may dispense with a Creator. But Scripture is full of *evolution* in the truest and highest sense, viz. the unfolding of God's purpose, the development of Divine thought and love. "Evolution" means "unfolding" or "*out-folding*." Nothing can be unfolded that has not been folded up. The plan, order, beauty, unity, life, happiness, of this wonderful universe could not be *folded up* in atoms of fiery gas, which after millions of years come out still as unchanged atoms of gas. They could be *folded up* nowhere but in a *mind* able to see the end from the beginning, and in the beginning to prepare for every following step and stage. What is true of God's works in creation is true of his providential government of men and of nations; and equally true of his grace (Eph. i. 4; iii. 9).

III. FORGETFULNESS OF THE PAST IS GREAT INGRATITUDE. True, we suffer for the faults and follies of our ancestors; but they conquered for us a rich inheritance. Who can reckon what we owe to the men who invented letters, figures, the plough, the loom, the anvil, the ship? Where should we be to-day without the mariner's compass, the printing-press, the steam-engine? So in spiritual things. What do we owe to the evangelists for the four Gospels; to St. Paul and the other apostles for their Epistles; to the translators of the Scriptures; to reformers, preachers, sacred poets, writers? Ungrateful forgetfulness and consequent undervaluing of the past is one of the dangers and faults of our age. We are in little peril of the Chinese superstition—worshipping our ancestors. Men's eyes turn feverishly to the future. What is old is set down as antiquated, obsolete, worn-out. In the wonderful movement, amazing discoveries, manifold progress of our day, we are apt to forget that our ancestors sowed, or at least ploughed, where we reap; and made the roads along which we travel, and the ladders by which we climb. If language, institutions, art, science, industry, had to make a fresh start with each generation, life would never rise above barbarism.

CONCLUSION. There is a sense in which it is well to forget the past—its failures, so far as they would discourage; its achievements, so far as they would content us (Phil. iii. 13, 14). We are not to dwell among the tombs; not to resemble a man carrying a looking-glass before him, which reflects only what is behind, and hides his path; but we are to converse with the past, that we may learn thankfulness (Ps. ciii. 2), humility (Job xv. 7), courage (Jas. v. 17), wisdom (1 Cor. x. 11), faith and hope (Pss. lxxvii. 10, 11; xlviii. 14).

Ver. 21.—*God's knowledge of men's hearts*. "Shall not God search," etc.? A world of perfect, mutual knowledge, in which the secrets of every heart lay open to every eye, must needs be either heaven or hell. Every one must be perfectly good or else perfectly miserable. In this world of mixed good and evil, God has mercifully built a wall of secrecy, or at least thrown a veil of privacy, around the consciousness of each one of us. Every heart has its own secrets. But the text reminds us that there is neither wall nor veil to God's eye, nor thinnest film of obscurity (Heb. iv. 13).

I. GOD KNOWS THE SECRETS OF THE HEART. 1. *Our thoughts*. How impenetrably these are veiled from our fellows! Our feelings often betray themselves. They escape our control. A look, a change of colour, a start, an exclamation, a tremor, may discover them against our will. But our thoughts lie deeper. Words may be used not to express, but to conceal them. A man's outward conduct and apparent character may be such that if the habitual current of his inmost thoughts could be laid open, his nearest friends would stand aghast. But God knows. Thought may flash so swiftly through the mind, that we ourselves are scarcely aware of it; but God sees. It may fade in a moment from the mirror of memory; but God remembers. 2. *Our feelings* lie as open to God as our thoughts. They are often a mystery to ourselves, not to him. They surprise us by their sudden and unexpected character and power. They do not surprise him. They perplex us by their mixture of good and evil. All is plain to him. Our inmost springs of character lie under his hand as well as eye. He knows how to *work in us both to will and to do* (Phil. ii. 13). 3. *Our hidden future*; unconscious capabilities, good or evil; undeveloped possibilities. Examples: Jer. i. 5—9; 2 Kings viii. 13; Luke v. 2—10. *Our sins* (known or unknown to ourselves), and all our *spiritual needs*. Perhaps you have not felt your sins. But God takes account (Ps. xc. 8); knows your need of pardon (Isa. i. 18); knows your weakness, and need of grace (John xiii. 37, 38); knows your need of trial and discipline (Heb. xiii. 6).

II. WE SEARCH IN ORDER TO KNOW; GOD SEARCHES BECAUSE HE KNOWS. 1. *By his providence*, proving men and revealing their character. As Abraham (Gen. xxii. 12), Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxii. 31). 2. *By his Spirit* (John xvi. 8). 3. *By his Word* (Heb. iv. 12, 13).

CONCLUSION. The Lord Jesus claims this Divine prerogative (Rev. ii. 23; 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5). But he loves to discover even the little that is good in us, and to reward it (Rev. iii. 8). He that probes can heal. He that knows can save (Rev. iii. 9). Let us open our hearts to him (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24).

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 22 and Rom. viii. 36.—*Martyr Churches, Hebrew and Christian: a contrast*. There is something marvellously touching about this psalm. It is the voice of a martyr Church, which has to witness for God amid persecution, flame, and sword. It divides itself into four parts. In the first there is a glowing retrospect (vers. 1—8);<sup>1</sup> in the second, a mournful plaint (vers. 9—17 and 22); in the third, a solemn appeal to the Church's King and Lord (vers. 18—21); in the fourth, an earnest prayer (vers. 23—26). As an historical document, which (as it has come down to us) is without date, we cannot but ask—To what period of Hebrew history can it apply? Another question suggests itself, viz.—Is the whole of the psalm justifiable? We will deal with these two questions as briefly as possible consistently with clearness, that we may "open up" the theme

<sup>1</sup> See two instructive articles, in Kitto's 'Daily Bible Readings,' on the Hebrew right to Canaan: Porter's edit., vol. iii. pp. 249, 253.

which the answers thereto will set before us. In order to ascertain the period of Israel's history to which the psalm refers, we must note the data presented to us therein. According to the psalmist's statements; (1) Israel had been scattered (ver. 11). (2) The people had been defeated in arms (ver. 10). (3) They were a reproach and a byword among the nations (vers. 13, 14). (4) They were sold into slavery (ver. 12). (5) They were "counted as sheep for the slaughter" (vers. 11, 22). (6) All this had happened to them, although they had not departed from their God; and although this had happened, still they were not departing from him (vers. 17, 18). (7) So far from this, they were even slain for their fidelity to truth and to God. "*For thy sake* we are killed all the day long" (ver. 22). It is not easy to find a period in the national life when the whole of these seven data can be verified. By one consideration or other, we are almost driven forward to the time of the Maccabees, between B.C. 200 and B.C. 160 (2 Macc. v. 11—23). Mr. Walford says, "That fierce and idolatrous prince Antiochus Epiphanes, the King of Syria, was actuated by an inveterate hatred to the laws and religion of the Jews; and he employed the utmost efforts of his policy and power to induce them to apostatize. Under the severest penalties, he prohibited the worship of Jehovah, the celebration of the sabbath, and other religious festivals, the practice of circumcision, and the whole of the precepts of the Mosaic Law. Notwithstanding this dreadful persecution, the greater part of the people steadily adhered to the Divine institutions, and refused to comply with the idolatrous acts to which their tormentors would have compelled them, though they suffered the most dreadful tortures for their noncompliance with the injunctions of their formidable adversaries."<sup>1</sup> To this period alone do we feel warranted in referring this psalm. There are two objections which have been made thereto. One, that the canon of Old Testament Scripture was finally closed long before. But such does not appear to have been the case.<sup>2</sup> Another, that at the time of the Maccabees the hope of a resurrection buoyed up the sufferers to an extent of which this psalm gives no trace whatever (2 Macc. vii. 6—17). But though this may have some weight, yet we must be careful not to lay too much stress on what the psalm does *not* contain. In all probability the survivors were more broken in spirit than such as were appointed unto death. Anyway, it is fairly clear that in the period to which we now refer, each one of the seven data above named can be verified with tolerable ease. But this cannot be said of either of the other periods to which the plaint of this psalm has been assigned. These are: 1. The time of David. (So Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Moll, Fausset, *et al.*) But in David's time we cannot verify either the first, second, third, or seventh of the above data. As Calvin remarks, the Church and nation, as a whole, were prosperous and victorious in David's time.<sup>3</sup> 2. Other periods assigned have been—the time of the Exile (Geikie); the times of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah (Baur, De Wette, and Tholuck); the times of Josiah and Jehoiakim (Barnes); the last days of the Persian dynasty (Ewald); but of one and all of these it may be said that they fail to meet the conditions of data 6 and 7. For the Chronicler expressly declares that the troubles of those periods came upon Israel in consequence of the peoples' unfaithfulness to their covenant and their God.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Walford's translation of the Psalms. Notes to Ps. xlii.

<sup>2</sup> "The persecution of Antiochus (B.C. 168) was for the Old Testament what the persecution of Diocletian was for the New, the final crisis which stamped the sacred writings with their peculiar character" (Westcott, art. "Canon," in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible'). See also Perowne's introduction to this psalm. Perowne, Calvin, Venema, Dathe, Rosenmüller, and Cheyne, favour the Maccabean authorship thereof. So Schürer, in 'The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ,' div. ii. vol. iii. § 32, ii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, and others deem this psalm a product of David's time; their remarks are worth reading, but their arguments fail to convince us. In the Davidic period of the Syro-Ammonite War, in which the Edomites took part, there was a vast amount of cruelty practised on David's side; the whole tone of the psalm seems alien from the state of things then. As Calvin remarks, the Church and nation as a whole were prosperous in David's time, and David himself was for the most part victorious. The only argument in Hengstenberg and Delitzsch that seems of weight is this, "The consciousness of fidelity towards the Lord, uttered in vers. 17—22, was scarcely possible at any other period" (Hengstenberg, p. 108; Delitzsch, p. 66). But if that assertion of national integrity be understood as named above, this argument ceases to have any force whatever.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—21.



Consequently, until further light is thrown on the subject, we adhere to the Maccabean period as that which most nearly fulfils the conditions to which reference is made. Another question is this—Is the Church's strong assertion of national integrity to God justifiable? Some say, Yes (so Moll, Delitzsch). Some, No (so Perowne). But it is only fair to the writer to suppose him to refer simply to the occasion that drew forth the complaint; he *cannot* mean that all the nation had been always and uniformly faithful. His intention evidently is this—that there was *at that time* no defection from God on the part of the people to account for the specific persecution over which he mourns. And since this is the case, he feels he may appeal to God to fulfil his own promise, and to save them for his mercies' sake.<sup>1</sup> We are not prepared to question the propriety of this. *All depends on the spirit in which it was said.* We well remember that, in the late American War, a noted and eloquent abolitionist went so far as to maintain that the North *must* win, because God was God! At the same time, there is no doubt that the complaint, the appeal, and the whole tone of the psalm bear traces of a partial revelation, and consequently of an imperfectly developed faith. We have but to pass over the line that divides the two dispensations, to plant ourselves in the middle of the first Christian century, and there we find that Christians were having, and were likely to have, a struggle as hard and fierce as that of the Hebrews of old. So much so that one of their number adopts as his own the most touching words in the whole psalm, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." And yet there is neither moan nor sigh, no, not a tear; rather, a song of gladness, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us!" (Rom. viii. 36, 37). *Whence the contrast between the Hebrews' sigh and the Christians' song whilst in the midst of persecution and death?*

I. IN THE HEBREW DISPENSATION GOD SPAKE THROUGH PROPHETS; IN THE CHRISTIAN GOD HAS SPOKEN IN HIS SON. (Heb. i. 1.) The great Transfiguration scene sets this forth in marvellous clearness. Moses and Elias vanish from sight, and the favoured three are left with Jesus only; in him believers saw the incarnate Son of God, the Father's express Image, who brought with him, in peerless union, the tenderness and sympathy of the brother-man, with the majesty and might of the infinite and eternal God. Hence the figure in the background of Hebrew thought was vastly different from that in the background of Christian thought; the former commanded reverential heed, as a Messenger from heaven; the latter, unbounded love and entire consecration, as Saviour and Lord of all!

II. THE STORY OF THE REDEMPTION WITH WHICH ISRAEL'S NATIONAL LIFE OPENED IS FAR OUTDONE BY THE HISTORY OF THE REDEMPTION BROUGHT IN BY JESUS CHRIST. It was with a glow of pride and thankfulness that the Hebrew singer recounted the deliverance from Egypt, and the entrance to Canaan's land (see also Psa. lxxviii. cv., cvi., cvii.). But how vastly is all this surpassed both in tenderness and in grandeur, by such words as these!—"He loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20); "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."<sup>2</sup> The words fell with force and beauty on the ears of Old Testament saints, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom; Ethiopia and Seba for thee;" but how much greater the charm on Christian ears of the words, "He gave himself" (Isa. xliii. 3, 4; Gal. ii. 20)!

"God, in the Person of his Son,  
Has all his mightiest works outdone."

III. THE HEBREW CHURCH, TERRITORIAL AND NATIONAL, HAS GIVEN PLACE TO THE CHURCH OF GOD, made up of men gathered from every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue. The Church's "land" now can never be invaded. We can never sigh, "The heathen are come into thine inheritance." That is impossible. The entrance into Christ's Church is not decided by rites nor by birth, save by the new birth of the Holy Ghost. Neither features nor racial marks form any sign of this new brotherhood.

<sup>1</sup> "This consciousness of [legal] righteousness seems to most to indicate the Maccabean period" (Cheyne). But is an assertion of national fidelity the same as a "consciousness of legal righteousness"?

<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 15. French, "sur cette croix."

"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. vi. 15).

IV. THE HATRED OF THE JEW BY THE GENTILE IS SUCCEEDED BY THE WORLD'S HATRED OF THE CHURCH. Where religion is or has been regarded as a piece of statecraft, whether among pagans, Papists, or Protestants, divergence from the rites appointed by state or Church has been punished with fire and sword. And the Antiochian persecution in the time of the Maccabees had its parallel in the Diocletian persecution in the Christian era. And although in our own land such treatment is not permitted, yet there is, though largely unseen to the public eye, a fierce hatred by the ungodly of pure and undefiled religion; and many and many a faithful soldier of the cross has to endure petty insult, abuse, and scorn, to an extent known only to himself and his Lord.

V. THE HATRED OF THE WORLD, WHICH WAS THE HEBREWS' DREAD, IS NOW THE CHRISTIAN'S BADGE OF HONOUR. It was so with the apostles (Acts v. 41; Gal. vi. 17). It was so with private Christians in apostolic times (1 Pet. iv. 13—16). In enduring persecution in the early Christian centuries, believers so regarded it. And even now we have to remember the Master's words in John xv. 18—21. The ancient Hebrews could not bear the scorn of their foes; Christians regard it as "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings," and delighted in the words, 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11.

VI. IN THE MIDST OF FIERCEST PERSECUTION, CHRISTIANS HAVE REALIZED THE CHANGELESSNESS OF DIVINE LOVE; even when they were "counted as sheep for the slaughter."<sup>1</sup> Where we have from the Hebrews a groan, we have from the Christians a song (Rom. viii. 35, 36; Stephen, Acts vi. 15 and vii. 55—60; Matt. v. 12; Rom. v. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 10; Phil. i. 29; Heb. x. 3, 4; Jas. i. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 13, 16). Believers knew that *nothing* could ever separate them from Divine love; and that the stroke that closed the life below set them free for the higher life "with Christ, which was very far better."<sup>2</sup>

VII. HENCE CHRISTIANS SAW, WITH A CLEARNESS TO WHICH HEBREW SAINTS COULD NOT ATTAIN, THAT THE CHURCH EXISTS IN TWO WORLDS. So our Lord has taught in Matt. xvi. 18 (Revised Version);<sup>3</sup> Rev. i. 18. And the disclosure of this became even clearer through the visions granted to the seer in Patmos, when (Rev. vii.) he saw one part of the Church, below, sealed in the great tribulation, and another part of the Church, above, caught up out of it. Knowing this, as the early Christians did, they knew also that the rage and hate of the enemy could in no wise really harm the Church, since their Lord was building it up in the realm above by the incoming of saints passing up from below. Hence even the slaughter of the people of God was but as a chariot of fire conducting them to the region where "they cannot die any more."

VIII. THUS, INSTEAD OF AN AGONIZING OBY TO GOD TO INTERPOSE, THERE IS A PEAL OF TRIUMPH THAT NO INTERPOSITION IS NEEDED. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." *More than conquerors!* What a grand and noble defiance of the enemy is there here! And how richly glorious is this proof of the development of the Divine intent to reveal his love more fully as the ages rolled on! Note: If an expositor unfolds Ps. xlv. historically *only*, he must transfer himself to the ancient times; but if he will deal with that psalm from a Christian standpoint, he will have a glorious field for expansion in contrasting the piteous wail of Ps. xlv. 22 with the gladness with which the very same words are quoted and applied in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Blessed be God that we live in the days of Christ's fulness of light and life! Amen.—C.

Vers. 1—26.—"*In the days of old.*" From this psalm we may learn three great lessons—

I. WE ARE TAUGHT TO SEE GOD'S HAND IN HISTORY. There is no such thing as chance. "The chapter of accidents," as some one has well said, "is the Bible of the

<sup>1</sup> The 'Life of the Rev. J. G. Paton' (first part) helped us to realize these words as no other recent history had done.

<sup>2</sup> See Neander's 'Christian Life of the First Centuries,' oh. xiii.; and Neander's 'History of the Church,' vol. i. pp. 118—217 (Bohn).

<sup>3</sup> See a sermon on this text by the present writer, in 'To the Light through the Cross' (Dickinson).

fool." There are differences in the nations and the ages; but God is in all. We acknowledge how God was with the Jews; but we are not so ready to admit that he had to do just as really and truly with other peoples. The difference, in the case of the Jews is that as to them the veil has been lifted, that light has been thrown upon their history. The story of their nation was written as by the hand of God himself, and was committed as a sacred heritage to be transmitted pure and entire from generation to generation (Deut. vi. 7—20; cf. Moses, Exod. xviii. 8; David, Ps. lvi. 8; Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 19). But, as St. Paul has taught us, "All these things happened to them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. x. 11). God governs the nations on the same principles as he governed the Jews. "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1 Cor. xii. 6).

II. HOW GOD IS CARRYING OUT HIS OWN GREAT END THROUGH ALL THE AGES OF HISTORY. The wise man said, "One generation passeth away, and another cometh; but the earth abideth for ever" (Eccles. i. 4). But if the earth abideth, it is because God abideth. He has his plans as to men, and throughout the ages he is working them out. There is the manifestation of himself. More and more the knowledge of God has increased. The Jews knew more than the patriarchs. The Christians know more than the Jews. Besides, God is, in a sense, educating the world. We stand related to the past and the future. We have learned much from the past. God employs one age to benefit another. How great are our obligations, through books and otherwise, to the great men of the past—to Gentiles and Jews! We are the heirs of all the ages. And if we have benefited by those who came before us, so we are bound to benefit those who come after us. Privilege is the measure of responsibility. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke xii. 48). We see but a little, and, as our knowledge is limited, our judgment must be imperfect. Yet we see and know enough to be satisfied that God is working in and by all events, and that he works ever towards a perfect end.

"Happy the man who sees a God employ'd  
In all the good and ill that checker life,  
Resolving all events, with their effects  
And manifold results, into the will  
And arbitration wise of the Supreme!"  
(Cowper.)

III. THAT GOD HAS CARED FOR HIS PEOPLE THROUGH ALL THE AGES OF HISTORY. This is the burden of this psalm. This is the great truth that gives life to the faith professed (vers. 1—8); that awakens the complaint of desertion in time of grievous trial (vers. 9—16); that sustains the hope of help and ultimate deliverance (vers. 17—26). As in the past, so still, there will be changes—not only mercies, but judgments. There will be trials of our faith; there will be the sharp discipline of chastisement; there will be, in some form or other, the "persecution" which tests our loyalty, and strengthens and purifies our love. But, come what will, God changes not; and God is our God. Our trust in men may fail, our hopes of earthly leaders may be disappointed and put to shame; but God is faithful who has promised, and he will never forsake those who trust in him. After Culloden, a soldier of Prince Charles's army was found lying dead on the field, with his Gaelic psalm-book open in his hand, and a bloody finger-mark at the ninth verse of this psalm, "But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame, and goest not forth with our armies." But Christ, the great Captain of our salvation, will not suffer the least of his soldiers thus to die, with lighted hopes and broken heart.—W. F.

Vers. 1—26.—*A prayer for help against foreign enemies.* The train of thought is this: "Thou hast helped us, thou must help us; but thou hast not helped us; yet have we not by any guilt on our part cut ourselves off from thy help; do thou therefore help us." *The problem of suffering*, as argued in this psalm, is similar to the problem in the Book of Job. *That God should not help them—*

I. WAS INCONSISTENT WITH GOD'S PAST TREATMENT OF THEM. (Vers. 1—3.) Their fathers had told them what work God had done in their days—in the days of old. What a history of Divine work have we in the past of the Christian Church!

II. INCONSISTENT WITH THEIR FAITH IN HIM. (Vers. 4—8.) God was their Almighty King, through whom they were able to achieve all conquests.

III. IT WOULD BRING NO PROFIT OR HONOUR TO GOD. (Ver. 12.) To leave them to their enemies. How could God act thus, so as to seem to dishonour himself and to bring no profit to his people?

IV. IT COULD NOT BE A PUNISHMENT FOR UNFAITHFULNESS. (Vers. 17—22.) They had not forgotten God; their heart was not turned back, neither had their steps declined from his way. They could not explain.

V. DID NOT SEEM CONSISTENT WITH GOD'S REGARD TO HIS OWN HONOUR. (Vers. 15, 16, 24.) He seemed to be taking the side of the blasphemer, and forgetting their fidelity. And this was the mystery of their experience.

VI. YET IT DID NOT UPROOT THEIR FAITH IN DIVINE HELP AT LAST. For they continue to supplicate the redeeming interposition of God (vers. 23—26). Faith always conquers its difficulties thus, by trusting where it cannot see or explain.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XLV.

THIS psalm is regarded by some as a simple epithalamium, or nuptial hymn, composed to honour a royal wedding, and sung as part of the wedding ceremony, at the marriage of some king of Israel or Judah. The marriage of Ahab with Jezebel, and that of Jehoram of Judah with Athaliah, have been specially suggested; also Solomon's marriage with an Egyptian princess. But the imagery of the psalm is altogether too exalted, and its phrases too peculiar (vers. 2, 6, 11, 16, 17), to suit any mere earthly marriage—not to mention that a mere epithalamium would never have been admitted into the Psalter. Hence most critics are driven to allow, however unwillingly, that the psalm is in some sense Messianic. It is certain that such was the view of the Hebrew Church, of the Septuagint interpreters, and of the early Christians generally. It is placed beyond a doubt, so far as believers in inspiration are concerned, by the reference to the psalm in the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 8, 9). Still, however, there remains the question—Is it absolutely and wholly Messianic, or did the author take some human event as the basis of his description, and give it a Messianic colouring? On the whole, we incline to the former view, and regard the writer as consciously depicting, not an actual, but an ideal, scene, one which floats before his mind as a thing to be realized at some future time, when Messiah shall be wedded to his bride, the Church, and establish his dominion over all

the world, and reign over all the nations of the earth gloriously.

The psalm consists of two main portions—an address to the bridegroom in eight verses (vers. 2—9), and an address to the bride in six (vers. 10—15); with an introduction and a conclusion, the latter comprised in two verses, the former in one verse only.

*Title of the psalm.* The psalm has an unusually long and complicated title. First, it is addressed, like so many others, to the precentor, or chief musician, the head of the tabernacle choir. Next, it is said to be “upon lilies,” which is not very easy to understand. Lilies were, no doubt, viewed as sacred flowers, and were largely used in the ornamentation of the temple (1 Kings vii. 19, 22, 26). They are also mentioned in the titles of three other psalms (Psa. lx., lxix., and lxxx.), but with what intention is wholly uncertain. A questionable exegesis connects the “lilies” of the present title with the “king's daughter” and the “virgins” of vers. 13, 14; but there is no mention of “virgins” in the other psalms said to be “upon lilies.” Further, the psalm is assigned “to the sons of Korah,” like Psa. xlii., xliv., and others, who may probably have been the writers. Fourthly, it is called “Maschil,” i.e. “an instruction.” Fifthly, it is said to be “a song of loves,” which seems to be a reference to the subject-matter.

Ver. 1.—My heart is inditing a good matter; literally, *bubbleth with a good matter*—is so full of it that the matter will

burst forth. I speak of the things which I have made touching the king; or, *I utter that which I have composed concerning the king.* My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. It is noted that only "psalms of high and solemn import" have formal exordia of this kind, announcing the intention of the writer.

Ver. 2.—*Thou art fairer than the children of men.* It has been argued that a description of the Messiah would not lay stress on his personal beauty. But in the Song of Songs the personal beauty of the bridegroom, whom so many critics regard as the Messiah, is a main point (Cant. v. 10—16). A perfect man, such as Messiah was to be, must needs be beautiful, at any rate with a beauty of expression. In calling his bridegroom "*fair beyond the sons of men,*" the writer at once gives us to understand that he is not a mere man. Grace is poured into thy lips; rather, *grace is poured out on thy lips* (Hengstenberg, Cheyne, Kay). The gift of gracious expression and gracious speech has been poured upon him from on high (comp. Cant. v. 16, "*His mouth is most sweet*"). Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. The gifts bestowed upon him show the Divine favour and blessing, which, once granted, are not capriciously withdrawn.

Ver. 3.—*Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O meet mighty; i.e. array thyself as a warrior, for thou wilt have enemies to conquer, and wilt need a sword against them* (see vers. 4, 5). With thy glory and thy majesty. There is no "with" in the original. Some think his sword is called Messiah's "glory and majesty." Others supply "put on," as implied in the "gird" of the first clause, and translate, "*Put on thy glory and thy majesty;*" i.e. show thyself in all the majesty and glory that naturally belong to thee. This is quite in accordance with the context.

Ver. 4.—*And in thy majesty ride prosperously; literally, and in thy majesty go forth, ride.* The riding intended is probably riding in a chariot. Because of truth and meekness and righteousness; rather, *because of truth and meek-tempered righteousness* (Kay); i.e. for the purpose of vindicating truth and righteousness in the case of those who outrage them. Righteousness, however, to be really righteousness, must be combined with meekness (comp. Zeph. ii. 3). And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. It is the right hand where-with the warrior strikes; and at each blow it opens to the striker terrible experiences, and thus may be said to "teach him terrible things."

Ver. 5.—*Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.* The original is

more graphic. It runs, "*Thy arrows are sharp—the peoples fall under thee—(they are) in the heart of the king's enemies.*" All the enemies of Messiah shall one day be chastised, and fall before him.

Ver. 6.—*Thy throne, O God.* So the LXX., the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 8), the Chaldee paraphrase, and, among critics, Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, Kay, Professor Alexander, and Canon Cook. The renderings proposed by Gesenius, Ewald, and the anti-Messianic school generally are wholly untenable, as Hengstenberg has clearly shown. The psalmist's intention is to address the King, whom he has already declared to be more than man (ver. 2), as "God." Is for ever and ever. A dominion to which there will never be any end. This is never said, and could not be truly said, of any earthly kingdom. When perpetuity is promised to the throne of David (2 Sam. vii. 13—16; Ps. lxxxix. 4, 36, 37), it is to that throne as continued in the reign of David's Son, Messiah. The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre; literally, *a sceptre of rectitude* (comp. Ps. lxvii. 4; xevi. 10).

Ver. 7.—*Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness, therefore, etc.* God will only commit rule and authority over his Church to one who will rule justly—one who loves righteousness and hates iniquity. Messiah is alone perfect in righteousness, and therefore entitled to rule. Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Some moderns translate, "Therefore, O God, thy God hath anointed thee," etc.; but the rendering of the Authorized Version is maintained by Dr. Kay, Professor Alexander, and our Revisers. The anointing intended is that outpouring of glory and blessedness on Messiah which followed upon his voluntary humiliation and suffering (comp. Phil. ii. 9; Heb. ii. 9).

Ver. 8.—*All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia; literally, myrrh and aloes [and] cassia are thy garments.* The "and" before "cassia" appears in four manuscripts, and in all the ancient versions. The garments are so impregnated with spices as to seem made of them. Out of the ivory palaces. "Ivory palaces" are mentioned in 1 Kings xxii. 39 and Amos iii. 15. We must understand "palaces adorned with ivory." Whereby they have made thee glad. So Hengstenberg, Kay, Professor Alexander, and others. But most moderns render, "Out of the ivory palaces strung instruments have made thee glad."

Ver. 9.—*King's daughters were (rather, are) among thy honourable women.* The marriage scene now begins to open upon us. The bridegroom has been depicted in all

his glorious majesty. The bride has now to be brought forward. She comes, accompanied by a train of attendants—"honourable women," or, "noble ladies" (Kay), many of whom are "kings' daughters" (comp. 1 Kings vii. 3). It must not be expected that all the details of the scene shall have exact equivalents in the spiritual marriage which it represents. Upon thy right hand did stand (rather, *stands*) the queen in gold of Ophir; *i.e.* in a vesture richly embroidered with gold thread (comp. Exod. xxviii. 5—8). "Gold of Ophir" was known, not merely to David (1 Chron. xxix. 4), but even to Job (xxviii. 16). The "right hand" of the king was the place of honour. We find it assigned by Solomon to the queen-mother, Bathsheba (1 Kings ii. 19).

Ver. 10.—Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear. The psalmist, having introduced the bride to our notice in ver. 9, proceeds to address her, and to describe the glories of her person and of her *entourage*. First of all, he bids her "hearken," "consider," and "incline her ear," *i.e.* reflect deeply on the new relation in which she is about to be placed, the new sphere which she is entering, the new duties which she will have to discharge. She must give herself wholly to her Lord and Spouse; she must have no thought for any one but him. Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. She must break with all associations and bonds and relationships that would separate between her and her King, forget the past in the present, cease to Judaize, and be wholly Christ's.

Ver. 11.—So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty. Devotion to her Lord will win her his tender regard, and make her other charms and graces please and delight him. For he is thy Lord; *i.e.* thy Lord and Master, entitled to thy utmost love and obedience, nay, to thy "worship"—therefore, Worship thou him. Worship, in a certain sense, is due from every wife to every husband; but the Church's worship of Christ is worship in the absolutely highest sense (Rev. v. 6—14).

Ver. 12.—And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift. Heathen nations shall be attracted to Christ and his Church, shall bring their offerings, and make submission, and humbly sue for favour. Tyre is taken as a type of heathen states and cities generally (comp. Isa. xlix. 18—23; lvi. 6—8; lx. 3—14). Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour. (On the wealth of Tyre, see Isa. xxiii. 2—8; Ezek. xxvi. 12, 16; xxvii. 3—38; xxviii. 13, etc.)

Ver. 13.—The King's daughter is all glorious within. The "King's daughter" of this passage can be no other than the bride herself—the "queen" of ver. 9. As among her attendants some were "kings' daughters" (ver. 9), so she could be no less. She is "glorious," not only without, in her robe of "gold of Ophir," but also and especially within—in the inner chamber of the heart—where she is indeed "glorious," through the sanctifying presence of God's Holy Spirit (Eph. v. 26, 27). Her clothing is of wrought gold (comp. ver. 9, and the comment *ad loc.*).

Ver. 14.—She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework; *i.e.* in garments richly embroidered. Such were known to the Hebrews from the time of the Exodus (Exod. xxviii. 4, 39), and were worn by princesses in David's day (2 Sam. xiii. 18). Brides were commonly "led" into the presence of the bridegroom. The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee (comp. ver. 9). A virgin train follows the bride as she is led to the palace of the bridegroom, for a royal bride necessarily had her attendants. These symbolize the Gentile converts that should attach themselves to the original Church, and follow that Church into Christ's presence.

Ver. 15.—With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought. A bridal train could not but be a festive one. Joy and gladness naturally characterize the procession of the nations out of darkness into God's marvellous light. They shall enter into the king's palace; *i.e.* be received into the heavenly dwelling-place.

Ver. 16.—Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children. In conclusion, the psalmist once more addresses the bridegroom. "Instead of thy fathers" according to the flesh—the princes of the royal house of David—"thou shalt have children" sons still more conspicuous—apostles, martyrs, confessors—a glorious and goodly company. Whom thou mayest make princes; *i.e.* rulers and governors of the Church—in all the earth (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. i. 6; v. 10; xx. 6).

Ver. 17.—I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations. 1, the psalmist, with my "pen of a ready writer," will so sing thy praise that thy name shall always be had in remembrance; and therefore—because of my words—shall the peoples—*i.e.* all the nations of the earth—praise thee for ever and ever. There is here, mixed with the praise of Messiah, a certain amount of self-glorification; but perhaps the "son of Korah," who had composed so noble a poem, may be excused for somewhat "vaunting himself."

## HOMILETICS

Ver. 2.—“*Altogether lovely.*” “Thou art fairer than the children of men.” Immense learning and ingenuity have been expended in the attempt to find some historic occasion for this psalm—some Jewish original of these royal portraits, the king and the bride. Solomon has naturally been thought of, as a type, Calvin thinks, of Christ; but the description does not suit him. Even Jehoram and Athaliah, Ahab and Jezebel, have had their advocates. The great Jewish commentators take the psalm as a prophecy of Messiah. Vers. 6, 7, quite inapplicable to Solomon, are in Heb. i. 8, 9 applied to Christ. We need not, therefore, bewilder ourselves in a fruitless quest, but may at once see our Saviour in these joyful and adoring words.

I. PROPHECY IS HERE CLOTHED IN POETRY, AND DECKED WITH ALLEGORY. The question, therefore, arises—How far may this description be understood of our Saviour's *personal presence*, when he lived as Man among men? The four Gospels contain no single descriptive trait. Some ancient Jewish writers strangely held that Messiah would be a *leper*, because Isaiah speaks of him as “smitten” (liii. 4). Some Christians have seemed to find pleasure in supposing our Lord signally devoid of manly beauty. Calvin more reasonably explains Isa. liii. 2 of the absence of worldly pomp and regal state. Bacon, noting that few great men have been eminent for personal beauty—though there are some remarkable exceptions—says, “That is the best part of beauty which no picture can express; no, nor the first view of life.” This kind of beauty—the soul speaking through the countenance—is what we cannot suppose absent in our Lord Jesus. We may gather from the Gospels that he had a more than princely nobleness, and a surpassing charm of graciousness. When men came into his presence they were impelled to fall at his feet. Yet little children ran at his call to nestle in his arms. Busy men, when he said, “*Follow me,*” left all and obeyed. The wretched and perishing recognized in him their Deliverer. Jesus alone among men grew from infancy to the prime of manhood with mind and body untainted with sin. It is not said “fairest of men,” but “fairer than the children of men;” he is not merely pre-eminent, but alone. “The temple of his body” was a fit habitation for “the fulness of the Godhead.” Bred to active toil in the pure mountain air, he had a frame capable of immense exertion. He could be heard by thousands in the open air. After a day of toil, not only speaking for hours, but by his intense sympathy taking on himself the burdens of suffering and sorrow he lifted from others, he would climb some mountain with the free step of a mountaineer, and spend the night in prayer. Even in his last inconceivably awful sufferings, we see no evidence of bodily weakness. After the agony of Gethsemane, the sleepless night of insult and torture, the terrible Roman scourge, and six hours on the cross, our Saviour's last words were uttered “with a loud voice,” and he expired not from exhaustion, but from a broken heart. Add to all this that in his heart dwelt love, such as no other ever held; and that behind the veil of his human nature was the majesty of indwelling Deity. Who can suppose that the countenance of Jesus was a mask to hide that grace and glory, not a mirror to reflect it?

II. THE BEAUTY OF WHICH ALL OUTWARD GRACE, MAJESTY, LOVELINESS, IS BUT THE SHADOW, BELONGS IN TRANSCENDENT MEASURE TO THE LORD JESUS. The lost “image of God,” defaced lineaments of which only remain in our ordinary human nature, reappears in him in full perfection (John xiv. 9). We read in him all that most concerns us to know concerning God—his character and bearing towards ourselves. The amazing claim made by the Bible (unheard of elsewhere) that man was made in God's likeness, seems contradicted by the whole current of our world's history. But who can deny that no lower style fits the life and personal character of Jesus? (Some of the strongest testimonies are from professed unbelievers.) In the most admirable characters great excellence is commonly balanced by corresponding defects. But what excellence or virtue can you find in him, either falling short of the highest vigour or strong at the expense of some other? What is his chief feature? Love? But not at the cost of the severest truth, the strictest justice. Holiness? Yet he was the Friend of sinners. Benevolence? But you can no more imagine him weakly indulgent, or imposed upon, than deaf to any real cry of need. Would you see the glory of the sunbeam? You must not gaze on the sun itself, but on the flowers, leaves, meadows

forests, hills, clouds, ocean, which his light clothes with their endless variety of colour and beauty. So the beauty of our Saviour's character is to be read in the hearts he drew to him, the lives he changed and hallowed, the characters he moulded, the homes he blessed, the love he inspired; in the track of life he has left—he only—in our dark world. But you need the open eye (Isa. liii. 2; John i. 14; ix. 39). An unbeliever may admire his portrait in the Gospels, as he would a character in fiction. But to those who seek and trust him, Jesus reveals himself (John xiv. 21—23; 1 Pet. i. 8; ii. 7).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—17.**—*The glories of the eternal King.* This psalm is one of those which set forth in glowing terms the glory and majesty of the King of kings, the Anointed One, who should come into the world. "It is a psalm of the theocratic kingdom, the marriage song of the King."<sup>1</sup> It is a song of the highest order, which, according to its title, was for the chief musician; set to "Shoshannim," a word which, we are told in the margin (Revised Version), means "lilies." This, however, does not throw much light on the matter. Fürst<sup>2</sup> is more helpful when he tells us that Shoshannim is a proper name, and denotes one of the twenty-four music-choirs left by David, so called from a master named Shushan. The introduction to the psalm, which is found in its first verse, is much more striking than would appear from the translation in either the Authorized Version or the Revised Version. It may be rendered, "My heart is boiling over<sup>3</sup> with a goodly theme: I speak: my work is for a King: may my tongue be as the pen of a ready writer!"<sup>4</sup> Here we have a striking illustration of the words of the Apostle Peter, "Holy men of God spake *as they were moved* by the Holy Ghost;" this fervour of spirit, urging on the worker as by a power beyond himself to write of "the King," is one of the ways in which the sacred writers were "moved." And there is no reason for refusing to acknowledge the far-reachingness of this psalm, as setting forth beforehand, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the grandeur of our victorious Lord. To no one, indeed, but Jesus, can we apply the epithets which are herein used. That a King "higher than the kings of the earth" is foretold in Scripture is certain (see 2 Sam. vii. 12—16; xxiii. 2—5; Pss. ii., lxxii., lxxix., cx.). So that it is no wonder to find that such is the case in this psalm.<sup>5</sup> The main difficulty in the psalm—in fact, the only serious one to believing critics—is the fact that the entire passage vers. 10—15 is based on a custom which in the psalmist's time was not only familiar to Orientals, but was even honourable in their eyes, though it would not be deemed so in ours. It would be a coveted honour among maidens to be among the well-beloved ones of an honourable king; for though the queen-consort was the principal wife, yet she was by no means the only one on whom the king bestowed his affection. Even David had six wives. He was not thought the worse of for this. The Law of God did not sanction it, but society did. Hence, though this psalm shoots far ahead to a beauty, a glory, and a majesty beyond the sons of men, yet *the ground-plan of its symbolism* is found in the usages of Oriental courts *at their best*.<sup>6</sup> If it was then deemed a high honour for maidens to be among the beloved of a king, how much greater would be the honour of those who should be brought in the far-off times to place their whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, at the absolute disposal of him who would be "King of kings, and Lord of lords"! We may gather up under four heads the main features of this

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Westcott, 'Commentary' on Heb. i. 7.

<sup>2</sup> See Lexicon, *sub verb*.

<sup>3</sup> The word שִׁבֹּב, "to boil," is used but once. But the ordinary word for a prophet, נָבִיא, is from נָבַא, which means "to bubble up," "to stream forth" (see Dr. Payne Smith's 'Bampton Lectures for 1869,' lect. ii.).

<sup>4</sup> See Revised Version margin, and the version of Dr. Louis Segond.

<sup>5</sup> Whether or no the immediate occasion of the writing of this psalm was any specific royal wedding, is an interesting question, but by no means an important one practically.

<sup>6</sup> For this reason it would not be appropriate to press every phrase to a Messianic application (see Calvin and Perowne hereon).



sublime prophetic forecast.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, however, it behoves us to take the Christian expositor's standpoint, and to carry forward the dim and suggestive words here given us, to the fuller and clearer setting of New Testament unfoldings.

I. HERE IS A KING FORESEEN, UNIQUE IN HONOUR AND RENOWN. That the sacred writers were familiar with the thought of a King who should come into the world, surpassing all others, we have seen above; this is shown in the passages to which reference has already been made. But even if such passages were fewer and less clear than they are, the amazing combination of expressions in the psalm before us is such, that to none other than the Son of God can they possibly be applied with any semblance of reason. But as we think of him, every term falls in place. Let us take each expression in order. There are no fewer than twelve of them. 1. There is *beauty*. (Ver. 2.) A beauty beyond that of the sons of men. This points to one who is above the race. And verily the beauty of the Lord Jesus is one of his unnumbered charms. He is the "chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely." 2. *Grace* is poured into his lips (ver. 2). How true was this of Jesus (Luke iv. 22; John i. 14)! Grace was also ever pouring out from his lips. 3. *The fullest blessings* descend continually upon him (ver. 2; cf. John iii. 34). 4. There are the *glory and majesty* of royal state (ver. 3). For "with" read "even" ('Variorum Bible'). The sword to be girded on his thigh as for war (see Delitzsch) is his glory and his majestic state. With these he will go forth, conquering and to conquer. 5. His cause is that of *truth, meekness, and righteousness*. (Ver. 4.) No other king ever combined these in perfection, nor even at all. "Meekness" is about the very last thought associated with earthly kings (but see Matt. xi. 29). 6. His progress would be marked by *terror* as well as by meekness (ver. 4; Ps. lxxv. 5; Rom. xi. 22; 2 Cor. v. 11; Rev. i. 7). 7. His *arrows would be sharp* in the hearts of his enemies (ver. 5), and the peoples (plural, Revised Version) would fall beneath him. He should have universal sway, and not over Israel only. 8. He should *be God*, and yet *be anointed by God*. (Vers. 6, 7.) How enigmatical before fulfilment! How fully realized in our Immanuel, in him who is at once God and man, David's Son, yet David's Lord! 9. His throne should be *eternal*. (Ver. 6.) "Thy throne,<sup>2</sup> O God, is for ever and ever" (cf. Heb. i. 8, 9). 10. His sceptre should be a *sceptre of righteousness*. (Vers. 6, 7.) This is pre-eminently true; so much so that even those who acknowledge him as Lord, and who have yet been destitute of righteousness, will be rejected (Matt. vii. 22, 23). 11. He would receive a *higher anointing* than that of others (ver. 7; Acts iv. 27; x. 38; Luke iv. 18). 12. Associated with his coming would be *fragrance, music, and joy* (ver. 8, Revised Version). Surely the gladness and song that gather round this King surpass all other gladness and all other songs that earth has ever known. No widow's wail, no orphan's sigh, attend on the conquests of this King. He conquers but to save. And the joy! oh, how great! Joy among the saved (1 Pet. i. 8). Joy among the saints (1 John i. 4). Joy among the angels (Luke xx. 10). Joy in the heart of the Father and the Son (Luke xv. 32). Joy for ever and ever (Isa. xxxv. 10). What a magnificent forecast, hundreds of years beforehand! Who dares to deny the supernatural with such a fact before him?<sup>3</sup>

II. HERE IS THE KING'S BRIDE. (Ver. 9.) What can the psalmist mean by the bride of *such* a King, but the Church of his love (see Eph. v. 23—32)? The following features, if worked out, would greatly exceed the space at our command. 1. She forsakes her Father's house, to be joined to this King, and leaves all her old associates behind her (ver. 10). 2. She is wedded to him (ver. 11, "He is thy Lord"). 3. She is devoted to him (ver. 11). 4. She is decorated with finest gold (ver. 9), and is at the

<sup>1</sup> On the prophetic character of this psalm, the words of Dr. J. Pye Smith, 'Scripture Testimony to the Messiah,' vol. i. p. 209, are invaluable. Perowne's, Walford's, Hengstenberg's, and Delitzsch's words may also be studied with great advantage. David Dickson's remarks are very sensible throughout, specially his six reasons for regarding the psalm as Messianic.

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. J. Pye Smith's note hereon; and a magnificent passage on the Messianic psalms in Canon Liddon's 'Bampton Lectures,' ii. p. 121 (best edition); also his notes from Kennicott, the Targum, and Dr. Pusey, pp. 122—124.

<sup>3</sup> Probably Cheyne would have his answer ready, and say, "Psychology will not allow of any such thing!" No, but an inspired pneumatology will!

place of honour by his side. 5. Her attendants should come from the nations, with their offerings of devotion (ver. 12).

III. **HERE IS THE KING'S OFFSPRING.** (Ver. 16.) The sacrifice which the bride had made for the sake of the King shall be more than recompensed by her having children, who should gather round her, and who should become "princes in the earth" (1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. i. 6; v. 10; xx. 6).

IV. **HERE IS FORETOLD THE KING'S UNIVERSAL AND ENDLESS PRAISE.** (Ver. 17.) Though the verse seems to be addressed immediately to the bride, evidently the carrying forward of the name to generation after generation is an honour chiefly of the King, and results from the bridal union. And the praise which shall accrue will be from the peoples (Revised Version), from all the nations; and this praise will be for ever and ever (Pa. lxxii. 17). "Christ's espousing unto himself a Church, and gathering more and more from age to age by his Word and Spirit unto it, his converting of souls, and bringing them into the fellowship of his family, and giving unto them princely minds and affections wherever they live, are large matters of growing and everlasting glory" (Dickson). "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."—C.

Vers. 1—6.—*The Kingship of Christ.* The unerring instinct of the Church has interpreted this psalm of the Messiah. Each Jewish king, in a sense, foreshadowed the true King. Of Solomon it might be said, in a special manner, that he was a type of the true King; but take him "in all his glory," and he was only a type dim and imperfect. "A greater than Solomon is here." Mark—

I. **THE PERFECTNESS OF HIS CHARACTER.** Christ's excellence is moral. All that was "fair" in others was but the broken fragments of the mirror. In him we see the perfection of beauty. Others might be "fair" in some things, and not in others, but in him all that is true and beautiful and good shines forth in harmony and fulness. "He is altogether lovely." And the excellence of Christ is not only human, but Divine. The glory of God shines in him. He is the perfect King, because he is the perfect Man; and he is the perfect Man, because "in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." His perfections, therefore, not only command the homage of all hearts, but they are unchanging and unchangeable as the glory of God.

II. **THE SPLENDOUR OF HIS ACHIEVEMENTS.** In the ancient monuments of Egypt and Assyria we see kings represented as going forth to conquer, and their enemies falling before their arrows. Such is the picture here. But the picture is relieved from all terrors and gloom. The King who conquers here conquers because he is also a Prophet, and because his cause is the cause of right and truth. His sword is "the Word of God." His arrows are the arrows of righteousness. His victory is the victory of love. "Grace" is in his lips. "Truth and meekness" mark his progress. "The people fall under" him—fall to rise again in dignity and strength.

III. **THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS REIGN.** (Vers. 6—9.) 1. The righteousness of his administration. 2. The happiness of his subjects. 3. The perpetuity of his kingdom. The kingdoms of this world have no permanence. They contain within themselves the elements of decay. Kings and kingdoms pass away.

"Sceptre and crown must tumble down,  
And in the grave be equal made  
With the poor crooked scythe and spade."

But it is otherwise with the kingdom of Christ. It is "for ever and ever."—W. F.

Ver. 16.—*Fathers and children.* We may consider three things.

I. **THE CHANGES OF LIFE.** The fathers come first, then the children. There is a constant succession. We see the same on the earth. The sun and moon and stars are the same that have been from the beginning, but the scarred face of the earth indicates change. The year has its seasons. Fields white unto harvest to-day will be bare to-morrow. The leaves fade, and others come in their places. So it is in life. Go where you will, the cry is, "Your fathers, where are they?" (Zech. i. 5). This throws great responsibility upon the living. They stand between the past and the future. From the fathers they have received much, and of them the children require much.

They are the "heirs of all the ages," and they are bound to hand down, pure and entire, to those who come after, the glorious inheritance they have possessed.

II. **THE COMPENSATIONS OF LIFE.** When the fathers are taken, we are ready to regard it as a calamity. If one falls who stood high in Church or state, we cry in our grief like David when Abner was slain, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" (2 Sam. iii. 38). But God's hand is in these things. There is compensation. If the fathers go, it is that the children may take their places. The line is never broken. The order which God has fixed continues. If Moses dies, Joshua takes his place. If Elijah is carried into heaven, his mantle falls upon Elisha. If Stephen is martyred in the midst of his labours, God has a chosen vessel in preparation, to take up his work, and carry it out in nobler ways than he could have done. So it is still. Though there be breaks and interruptions and intervals when things were dark, yet the law holds good. Let us take heed. The future is the outcome of the present. We are sowing in the hearts of our children the harvests that are to be. Let us do our duty towards those who are to come in our place, and leave results to God. "O Church of God," said Augustine, "think not thyself abandoned, because thou seest not Peter, nor seest Paul. Seest not thou through whom thou wast born; out of thine own offspring has a body of 'fathers' been raised up to thee."

III. **THE DISTINCTIONS OF LIFE.** 1. *Their source is Divine.* We say the sovereign is the source of honour. So it is in the higher things. True honour is from God only, and he gives it to those alone whom he has "made" to be worthy (John i. 12). 2. *Their character is princely.* When God makes princes, he makes princes in reality. He gives not only place, but power; and not only power, but the highest honours (Gen. xxxii. 28; 2 Tim. i. 7; Rev. i. 5). What Gideon's brethren were in appearance they are in reality (Judg. viii. 18). 3. *Their influence is world-wide.* Wherever they are known, they are honoured. What was true of the twelve is true in a measure of all Christ's servants (Matt. xix. 28). As Samuel Rutherford said with his last breath, "Glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land."—W. F.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XLVI.

**THIS** is a psalm of consolation. Israel, in great peril (vers. 1—3, 6, 8, 9), consoles herself with the thought of God's might, his protecting care, and his ability to shatter all the combinations that her enemies may form against her. There is nothing to determine absolutely what particular peril is spoken of; but, on the whole, the allusions seem to point to the invasion by Sennacherib, rather than to any other event in Hebrew history. Critics of such diverse schools as Hengstenberg and Professor Cheyne unite in this conclusion.

The metrical construction is very simple and regular, if, with several eminent critics, we restore, after ver. 3, the refrain of vers. 7 and 11, which seems to have accidentally fallen out. We then have three stanzas of four verses each, each stanza terminating with the same refrain.

"Upon Alamoth" in the title is best explained as a musical direction—to be sung upon high notes, with voices shrill and clear, like those of "virgins."

Ver. 1.—**God is our Refuge and Strength** (comp. Psa. xviii. 2; xiv. 22, etc.). **A very present Help in trouble**; literally, *a very accessible Help*—one easy to be found (comp. 2 Chron. xv. 4).

Ver. 2.—**Therefore will not we fear**, though the earth be removed; or, *though the earth change*—a somewhat vague expression, probably to be understood of political changes and revolutions (see ver. 6). And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; rather, *and though the mountains be hurled into the heart of the seas*. A metaphor for still more strange and violent disturbances and commotions. The revolutions and disturbances intended are probably those caused by the Assyrian career of conquest briefly described in Isa. x. 5—14; xxxvii. 18—27, and fully set forth in the annals of the Assyrian kings (see G. Smith's 'Eponym Canon,' pp. 106—149; and the author's 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 83—210).

Ver. 3.—**Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled**; or, *roar and foam* (Hengstenberg, Kay, Cheyne). **Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof** (comp. Ps. xciii. 3, 4; Jer. xlv. 8, 9; xlvii. 2).

Ver. 4.—**There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God**

In contrast with the scene of tumult and disturbance in the world at large, which the writer has presented to us in vers. 2, 3, he now shows us, resting in perfect peace and tranquillity, "the city of God," threatened, indeed, by the nations, but undismayed by them, and calmly trusting in the protection of the God who is "in the midst of her." To this city he assigns a "river, the streams whereof make her glad;" imagery in which we may recognize the perennial fountain of God's grace—that "pure river of water of life," which, welling forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb, continually refreshes and gladdens the Church of Christ (Rev. xxii. 1), whether her dwelling-place be the earthly or the heavenly Jerusalem. The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High (comp. Ps. xliii. 3). The direct application is, of course, to the earthly Jerusalem, which the armies of Sennacherib were threatening.

Ver. 5.—God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. While the world is being turned upside down (vers. 2, 3, 6), the Church is unmoved—since "God is in the midst of her." God shall help her, and that right early; literally, *at the turning of the morning*, or, in other words, "at the break of day" (comp. Ps. xxx. 6; xlix. 14; Isa. xvii. 14). The deliverance of Israel from Sennacherib came, it is to be remembered, when it was discovered "early in the morning" that in the camp of the Assyrians were 185,000 "dead corpses" (2 Kings xix. 35).

Ver. 6.—The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted (comp. vers. 2 and 3). The past tenses are probably the "preterite of prophetic certainty." The writer foresees and announces the destruction of Israel's enemies.

Ver. 7.—The Lord of hosts is with us (comp. 2 Chron. xv. 2; xx. 17; Isa. viii. 8, 10). This is the ground of assurance. Our God, Jehovah, is "the Lord of hosts"—one who has countless angels at his command (2 Kings vi. 16, 17; Ps. lxxviii. 17; Matt. xxvi. 53). And he is "with us"—on our side, ready to help. The God of Jacob is our Refuge; *i.e.* our covenant God, the God who entered into covenant with our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Ver. 8.—Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in

the earth. The deliverance of Israel from its peril is effected by "desolations" or "devastations," which God accomplishes among the nations. The announcement is very vague and general, so that it would apply to almost any occasion when the people of God were delivered from a pressing peril.

Ver. 9.—He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth (comp. Isa. ii. 4; xi. 9; lxxv. 25). Each great deliverance effected by God is followed naturally by a term of peace (comp. Judg. iii. 11, 30; v. 31; viii. 28; "and the land had rest twenty, forty, eighty years"), each such term being typical of the final peace, when God shall have put down all enemies under Messiah's feet. He breaketh the bow, and uttereth the spear in sunder; *i.e.* he destroys all offensive weapons, so that none may "hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain" (Isa. xi. 9). He burneth the chariot in the fire. War-chariots were largely employed by the Assyrians, and formed the main strength of the army of Sennacherib (2 Kings xix. 23).

Ver. 10.—Be still, and know that I am God (comp. Exod. xiv. 13, 14; 2 Chron. xx. 17; Isa. xxx. 15). As a general rule, God requires man to co-operate with him. "We are fellow-workers with God." "*Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera.*" But there are occasions when man must stand aloof, and all must be left to the almighty Disposer of all things. The invasion of Sennacherib was such an occasion. Human effort could not but be futile; and unless God gave deliverance in some strange and extraordinary way, there was no hope of escape: Judæa must cease to exist as an independent country. I will be exalted among the heathen. When a deliverance was plainly miraculous, the God of Israel got him special honour among the neighbouring heathen nations, who could not gainsay the fact that there had been a supernatural interposition (comp. Exod. xiv. 4, 17, 18). I will be exalted in the earth. Exaltation among the neighbouring heathen had an effect upon a still wider circle (comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 23, "And many brought gifts to Hezekiah, King of Judah, and he was magnified in the eyes of all heathen henceforth").

Ver. 11.—The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge (see the comment on ver. 7).

#### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The unchangeableness of God.* "God is our Refuge," etc. Mountains are the grandest of God's earthly works; natural images of majesty, strength, durability. Rearing their peaks above the clouds, they gather the airy treasures of snow and rain; and pour from never-failing fountains the streams that water the valleys.

and feed the plains. Natural fortresses, where liberty has often found an impregnable asylum. Yet they are perishable. Waters wear their rocky sides. Earthquakes and landslips topple their crags into the valleys. Volcanic fires sometimes, as in our own day, tear them from their ancient foundations, and hurl their ruins into the sea (Krakatoa, 1883). Such an overthrow of what seems strongest and most stable in outward nature, is in the text the image of the possible failure of all earthly support, defence, comfort, hope. But he who built the mountains and gave ocean its bounds, fails not, changes not. "God is our Refuge and Strength: therefore will we not fear." These are the two contrasted thoughts of our text.

I. THE INSECURITY OF EVERY EARTHLY REFUGE; the instability of all human strength. This may be realized: 1. *In public calamity; national disasters.* Depression of trade may carry discomfort, even ruin, into hundreds of thousands of homes. Our commercial system is so complicated and nicely balanced that one gigantic failure may give a shock to the whole fabric. The tremendous possibilities of war have to be reckoned; clear though the sky may be, the war-clouds may at any time gather and burst; perhaps with destructive fury surpassing all example. Even if our own shores still escape, war expenditure may drain our resources, and the destruction of our commerce entail scarcity—even famine. Some new form of pestilence may defy healing skill. The pride of the nations may be broken, their wealth wasted, their science proved unavailing. 2. *In personal and family trouble.* It has happened sometimes—travellers well know the spots—that when sky and sea were calm, and no earthquake shook the land, a whole hillside has slid down without warning, carrying down and wrecking peaceful home-steads, even overwhelming whole villages. Even so, when public prosperity is untroubled; the private foundations of your health, fortune, happiness, hope, may fail, and with brief or no warning, and all your earthly welfare be laid in ruins (Ps. xxx. 6, 7). 3. *In prevailing unsettlement of thought and belief.* When old forms go out of fashion; traditional beliefs are discredited; trusted leaders fail; men seem to hold nothing firm or settled. Worst of all, when this agitated atmosphere infects our inward life; doubt surges in, and threatens to overwhelm faith and conviction; the ground seems to quake under our feet, and darkness to beset and bewilder our soul.

II. THE NEVER-FAILING REFUGE. God's children, in these and all other calamities, find a "very present Help" in him. 1. His *power* to save is all-sufficient. All hearts and events are in his hand (2 Chron. xiv. 11; xvi. 9). 2. His *wisdom* is infinite. All that can happen is known—*has always been known* to him. He can never be at a loss to answer prayer. 3. His *promises* meet every emergency (Heb. xiii. 5, 6). 4. His *faithfulness* is the immovable foundation on which we may build absolute trust (Heb. vi. 18, 19). All the experience of the past, all the hope of the future, sheds its light on the dark present, because *he* changes not. If there be any truth, God must be true. And if anything be certain, it is that *Jesus Christ*, "the true and faithful" Witness, speaks God's truth to us (John xiv. 6, 10, 27; xix. 37; Heb. xiii. 8).

Vers. 1, 7, 11.—"*Our Refuge.*" The whole spirit of this noble psalm is condensed in this one phrase—"God is our Refuge." The Hebrew, as the margin of our Bibles shows, has a different word in vers. 7, 11 from ver. 1, signifying "a high place" (Revised Version, "or a high tower")—a retreat beyond reach of foes. The word in ver. 1 means "somewhere [or, 'some one'] to trust in." These two thoughts—*trust* and *safety*—are well expressed in our word "Refuge." Take the whole psalm as embodying and enforcing this sentiment.

I. IN TROUBLE WE NEED A REFUGE. In bodily sickness and weakness, healing ministry, careful watching, an arm to lean on. In perplexity, a wise counsellor. In want, danger, or misfortune, timely succour. In sorrow, sympathy and comfort. Under sense of sin, a voice of forgiveness. To lean helplessly on others when we ought to put our own shoulder to the wheel, is unmanly and shameful. But the pride of independence is an illusion when it makes us forget how constantly and how much we depend on one another. None is self-sufficient.

II. GOD IS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT, NEVER-FAILING REFUGE OF HIS CHILDREN. The Hebrew for "very present" means literally "greatly found;" not far to seek, but nigh at hand; not difficult to find, but offering himself; found by experience to be

all that he promises, all that we need. Human ministry can do much in the lesser troubles of life; it is God's appointed way of help. But when "the mountains" are removed—in the great crises and overwhelming sorrows, dangers, burdens of life nothing will serve short of this—"underneath are the everlasting arms." Above all, in spiritual troubles. "Who can forgive sin but God alone?" Who but Jesus can shepherd us through the dark valley?

III. WHEN TROUBLE DRIVES US TO OUR REFUGE, IT FULFILLS ITS MISSION. The curse becomes a blessing, and sorrow bears fruit in joy. In fair weather the ships pass gaily by the harbour of refuge; in the storm they make for it. It is easy to stand at the helm with a fair breeze and smooth sea. Easy to stand sentry in time of peace. Easy to trust God with a well-spread table and home bright with blooming faces. In the tempest; in war, when the bullet sings through the dark night, and the blast is freezing to the bone; or by the bed of sick, perhaps dying child,—not so easy! But then it is that God's help is "found" by those who trust him (Gen. xxii. 14; John vi. 18—20).

Remark: 1. This is the testimony of experience. God *is found* to be such a Help and Refuge. All the conclusions of science do not rest on a broader basis of induction, a surer witness of experience, than the faith of God's Church. 2. Trouble is not *necessarily* a means of grace or blessing; has no natural power to drive or lead men to God. We must hear God's voice in it; feel his hand; be led by his Spirit (2 Cor. xii. 8—10). Sad, indeed, if our troubles be wasted,—all misery and no blessing!

Ver. 4.—*The river of God.* "There is a river," etc. How is it that when we read or chant this psalm, it never seems to us that it was written in an ancient foreign tongue, nigh three thousand years ago? It is as much a living voice, comes as home to our hearts, as though written in our mother tongue and our own generation. So it is with other psalms, however local in imagery, Jewish in application. Bible poetry is unlike any other, in its capacity of translation into all languages. Usually, the finer poetry is, the more it suffers in translation; the less can it make a home for itself anywhere but in its native land. Why is the case so different with the poetry of the Bible? The reason lies deeper than any poetic beauty, than human patriotism, than human sympathy. It is *spiritual force*. These songs of Zion utter the experience of souls quickened and breathed through—inspired by God's own Spirit. Therefore their interest is universal, their charm undying, their force inexhaustible. The living stream at which those ancient believers drank flows fuller, deeper, broader, with the lapse of ages; and still makes glad the city of God. This beautiful image, in its broadest application, is to be taken of the unfailing care, gracious presence, overflowing loving-kindness, of our God, with whom is "the fountain of life." More especially we may apply it to (1) *the written Word*; and (2) *the indwelling Spirit of God*. These are the two main streams—one outward, one inward—by which we drink of the Divine fullness.

I. THE WRITTEN WORD. The full, deep, sweet stream of truth in the promises, precepts, prayers, revelations, histories, and examples of Old and New Testament Scriptures. Amazing effort is put forth in our day to prove that this stream is neither clear nor pure; that it flows from no certain fountain; in fact, to dry it up altogether. Modern science has taught us, what no one dreamed of at the middle of last century, that water is made up of two kinds of air, and can be decomposed by electricity. What then? Does this make any difference in the need and power of water to quench our thirst, make our fields fruitful, keep our skin and raiment and all we have clean? All this is the same now as in David's days. In like manner, the immense learning and criticism bestowed on Scripture, partly instructive, throwing a flood of light on its structure, its language and literary character; partly destructive, endeavouring to destroy its authority, page by page, and decompose it into fragments—has not in the least altered its living power or our need of its teaching. It still gives us truth, never taught or dreamed of by other religious teachers; promises of God, which are nowhere, if not in the Bible; laws which embrace and explain the whole of human duty; examples for daily guidance; a history, in which God is seen dealing with men and manifesting himself to them along one unbroken line, from the birth of our race to the end of our present world; above all, in our Lord Jesus, a personal manifestation of God, a full deliverance from all the ruin and misery of forsaking, forgetting,

disobeying God, and warrant for coming to him in absolute trust and perfect love; and a glorious certainty of a life which death cannot touch—eternal life in *Jesus Christ* our Lord. All this, and more, is in the Bible. Unbelief may rob the unbeliever of his portion, but cannot impoverish the Bible. “The Word of God liveth and abideth.” What joy, comfort, strength, light, purity, is it at this moment diffusing through myriads untold of Christian hearts and lives! It makes glad the city of God. A single promise may be the stay of a sinking heart; a single text the hinge of a new life.

II. THE INWARD GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Whence this wonderful power of the Scriptures to quicken, nourish, guide, bless, the higher life of man, as no other writings can? From God’s Spirit in the men who wrote them. Only life feeds life. The devout reader need not perplex himself with any questions about the *inspiration of the Bible*, as long as he hears in it God’s voice, reads in it God’s thoughts, feels in it God’s love, beholds in it “the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.” But for all this, *inspiration—q.d.* the living breath and life-giving presence of God’s Spirit—is as needful for the readers as it was for the writers. Of the same sort? Certainly not. But as real (1 Cor. ii. 10—15; 1 John iii. 27; John vi. 44, 45). If there be one truth to which the Scriptures bear clear witness, it is the need of Divine teaching (compare with 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16; Acts xvi. 14; John iv. 14; vii. 37—39).

III. THIS DIVINE FULNESS IS THE SOURCE OF THE CHURCH’S PEACE AND JOY. It “maketh glad the city of God”—the communion of saints; the true Israel. Ancient Jerusalem was so well supplied with water as never to fear drought. When besieged by the Crusaders, it was the besiegers who suffered thirst, not those within the walls. But one perennial spring is known to exist at Jerusalem (“En-rogel,” 1 Kings i. 9, which feeds, through a tunnel, the pool of Siloam; see ‘Biblical Handbook,’ p. 334). But beneath the temple were vast reservoirs, by some supposed supplied from a spring, but by explorers said to be fed by the rain—“the rivers of God” (Ps. lxxv. 9). So, in the common treasure of God’s Word, the common possession of God’s Spirit (Rom. viii. 9), the Church of Christ has a never-failing fountain and unfathomable reservoir of joy, strength, peace, for evermore. (N.B.—This third head might supply a sermon by itself.)

Ver. 9.—*War*. “He maketh wars to cease.” If we were asked to give in one short word the most prevailing character, the most striking feature, of human history—the history of all nations, civilized or savage, ancient or modern—we must reply, “War.” If we were asked—What has been the severest scourge under which human life and happiness have suffered? we must again say, “War.” If we were asked to furnish in one word the proof that human nature is sinful, *q.d.* that its passions are not bridled by justice or ruled by love, we must again answer, “War.” Is this to be the case always? Will the time come when nations “shall learn war no more?”

I. GOD ALONE CAN MAKE WARS TO CEASE. Science cannot do it. It can teach men how more skilfully to destroy each other, but not to love one another. Commerce cannot do it. Some of the cruelest and wickedest wars have been waged for the sake of trade and revenue. Education cannot do it. The most highly educated nations of the world are the most military. Progress and civilization cannot; for they do not make men unselfish. The source of war is not in outward circumstances, but in human nature; in the lust of gain, of power, of glory, of vengeance (Jas. iv. 1). No power can subdue these but his who could say to the winds and waves, “Peace, be still!”

II. GOD CAN DO IT. By miracle, if he sees fit; sink every war-ship, paralyze every soldier’s arm or eye. But that is not God’s way of ruling the world. He will not make wars to cease unless the roots out of which they grow be plucked up. While sin reigns, strife will reign. Only let justice and benevolence become universally recognized and obeyed, and war must die out. For, allowing that war may be just and even (in the long run) benevolent *on one side*, there never was and never can be a war that was just *on both sides*. How, then, can God make war to cease? By making all men loving and righteous, wise and unselfish. This does not imply any imaginary impossible perfection. There are tens of thousands who make no pretence to perfection, yet are so governed by justice and inspired by kindness, that if all were

like them, war would be impossible. The love of God, the Spirit of God, and the truth of God, can do this, and are doing it daily. What God does in these cases he can do in others. Things impossible with men are possible with God.

III. GOD HAS PROMISED TO DO THIS. (Isa. ii. 4; Jas. iii. 18.) No nobler title belongs to our Saviour than "Prince of Peace" (see Eph. ii. 14; Col. i. 20; Rom. v. 1). If we are tempted to ask, "If God *can* make wars to cease, and has promised, *why* does war continue to scourge mankind?" the answer must be, "Because men will not have God's remedy." As long as they are not at peace with God, so long they cannot, shall not, be at peace among themselves. Do not think that God looks down on human suffering with indifference. The whole Bible is in contradiction to such a thought; but, above all, the fact that his beloved Son has taken our suffering flesh on him. God is the "Author of peace, and Lover of concord." But he will have no remedy which does not *go to the root*. Righteousness must go first; peace follows (Isa. xxxiii. 17; Jas. iii. 18). Meanwhile let us rejoice in the promise and prospect (Ps. lxxii. 7). Every triumph of the gospel, every heart yielded, every life consecrated to Christ, is a step towards the blessed reign of universal peace (Matt. v. 9).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The saint's stronghold.* This psalm is one of those "for the sons of Korah," on which see our remarks on Ps. xlii. It is "a song upon Alamoth," which, according to Fürst,<sup>1</sup> is the proper name of a musical choir. As the word "Alamoth" means "virgins," it is supposed that the song was for soprano voices. We have, however, to deal with the contents of the song itself. It has long been a favourite with the people of God. "This is my psalm," said Luther. To this we owe his "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," and many other songs of the sanctuary. It would seem to have been suggested by some one of the many deliverances which the Hebrews had from the onsets of their foes; but to which of those it specially refers, is and must be left an open question. There are phrases in it which remind us of the redemption from Egypt (cf. ver. 5 with Exod. xiv. 27, Hebrew). There are others which recall the deliverance for which Jehoshaphat prayed (cf. vers. 10, 11 with 2 Chron. xx. 17, 22, 23). Other words vividly set forth the boasting of Sennacherib and the destruction of his army (cf. vers. 3, 6 with 2 Kings xviii. 29—35; xix. 6, 7, 15—19, 28, 35). At each of these crises the four points of this psalm would be (1) a raging storm; (2) a commanding voice; (3) a humbled foe; (4) a jubilant song. And how many times this song has been sung by individuals, by families, by Churches, by nations,<sup>2</sup> the closest students of history best can tell. And in setting forth this song for homiletic use, we might show that it records the repeated experience of the Church; that it becomes the grateful song of the family; that it fits the lips of the believer in recounting providential mercy; that it is the constant song of the saints in rehearsing redemption's story. To deal with all these lines of thought would far exceed our space. We will confine ourselves to the last-named use of the words before us, showing that this forty-sixth psalm means far more on the lips of the Christian than it did on the lips of Old Testament believers. It is not the song itself that is our chief joy, but that revelation of God which has made such a song possible for believers—first under the Old Testament, and specially, in Christ, under the New Testament.

I. THE SAINTS NOW HAVE A CLEARER VIEW OF GOD. (Heb. i. 1, 2.) Of old, God spake through prophets; now he speaks in his Son. And when we hear our Lord say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," we know at once to whom to turn for the interpretation of that greatest of all words, "God." To the Hebrews, their covenant God was revealed in words (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7); but to us he is revealed in the living Word, in the Person of the incarnate Son of God. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

II. THE SAINTS NOW CAN RECORD A GREATER DELIVERANCE than Israel of old

<sup>1</sup> See his 'Lexicon,' *sub verb.*; cf. 1 Chron. xv. 20 and 'Variorum Bible.'

<sup>2</sup> As in the great event which called forth the immortal words, "Deus efflavit, et dissipantur."



could boast—an infinitely greater one. Not only was there all the difference between rescues that were local, temporary, national, and one that is for the race for all time, but also the difference between a deliverance from Egypt, Ammon, Moab, and Assyria, and one that is from Satan and from sin; from the curse of a broken Law, and from the wrath to come. The song of Miriam is infinitely outdone by the new song, even the song of Moses and the Lamb.

III. THE SAINTS CAN NOW REJOICE IN A BETTER COVENANT. At the back, so to speak, of the psalm before us there was a recognized covenant between God and the people (Exod. xix. 5, 6; Ps. xlv. 7, 11). In the later days of David “the everlasting covenant” was the aged monarch’s hope and rest. But now, in Christ, we have the “better covenant,” “the everlasting covenant,” sealed and ratified with blood (Heb. viii. 6; xiii. 20; Matt. xxvi. 28). This covenant assures to the penitent, forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. It includes all that Christ is and has, as made over to those who rely on him, for ever and for ever. It is not dependent on the accidents of time or sense. No duration can weaken it; no ill designs can mar it; not all the force of earth or hell can touch those who look to “the sure mercies of David.”

IV. THE SAINTS NOW MAKE UP A MORE PRIVILEGED CITY. (Ver. 4.) While nations were proudly and angrily raging like the wild waves of the tossing sea, there was a calm, peaceful river, whose branches peacefully flowed through the city of God. Thus beautifully does the psalmist indicate the calm which took possession of believers then, while the nations roared around them. And in “the new Jerusalem,” the present “city of God,” which Divine love founded, and which Divine power is building up, there still flows the deep, still, calm river of Divine peace and joy and love. Or, if it be preferred, let Dr. Watts tell—

“That sacred stream, thine Holy Word,  
That all our raging fear controls;  
Sweet peace thy promises afford,  
And give new strength to fainting souls.”

Through the new city of God, the Holy Catholic Church, made up of all believers, this peaceful stream ever runs, refreshing and fertilizing wherever it flows. No frost congeals it; no heat can dry it up; it will eternally make glad the city of God. Hence—

V. THE SAINTS NOW PEAL FORTH A MORE JUBILANT SONG. We can sing this psalm, especially its first verse, with wider intelligence, larger meaning, deeper peace, and more expansive joy, than were possible to the Hebrews of old. As revelation has advanced, the believer’s joy in God has grown likewise. Faith becomes larger as faith’s Object becomes clearer. And no Hebrew could sing of the deliverance of his fathers so joyously as we can sing of the redemption of a world—a redemption in which we can rejoice, not only in our days of sadness, but in our days of gladness too. And as the psalmist could think of God as the Lord of hosts, and yet the God of Jacob; as the Leader of the armies of heaven, and yet the Helper of the lonely, wayworn traveller; so the believer, in thinking of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, can say, “He died for all,” and also, “He loved me, and gave himself for me.”

VI. THE SONG IS GRANDEST WHERE TROUBLE HAS BEEN THE GREATEST. “He has been found a Help in trouble exceedingly”—the adverb expressive of intensity may refer to the greatness of the trouble. But however this may be, certain it is that *it is in the troubles of life that the believer finds out all that God is to him*. And the man who can sing this psalm most jubilantly is the one who has been weightied with care most heavily. This is the glory of our great redeeming God. He is a Friend for life’s dark days, as well as for the bright ones. Note: 1. The troubles of life often bring out to us our need of God. It is easy to be serene when trouble is far from us, and to spin fine philosophic webs; but let trouble come upon us,—that will make all the difference. The late beloved Princess Alice was almost led to the dark negations of Straussianism; but when she lost her child, her trouble led her to feel her need of a Refuge, and then she sought and found the Lord. Ellen Watson, the accomplished mathematician, revelled in exact science, and “*wanted nothing more*,” till the death of a friend broke in on her exact science, rent her heart, opened her eyes, and was the

means of leading her to Jesus. The experience of a young civil engineer, whom the writer visited in his last illness, was precisely the same. 2. Those who can give us no comfort or rest in the troubles of life are of little use in such a world as this. In a letter of an aged Unitarian minister to a friend of the writer, the expression is used, "I am just battling with the inevitable." "*Battling with the inevitable!*" So it must be, if men turn away from our God as the Redeemer from sin, the Saviour of the lost. 3. It is the glory of Christ as our Refuge that he can hide us securely in the fiercest troubles of life.

"Should storms of sevenfold thunder roll,  
And shake the globe from pole to pole,  
No flaming bolt shall daunt my fate,  
For Jesus is my Hiding-place."

C

**Vers. 1—11.—*Hope for the troubled.*** Faith in God assures—

I. **HELP IN TROUBLE.** It may be some storm of outward or of inward trial comes, or both may be combined. Enemies may rage without, and sin may rouse tumults and fears within. But "God is our Refuge;" he is always near, always sufficient. The manslayer might fail to reach the place of safety; but God is at our right hand, and it needs but a cry from our hearts to secure his help. The Israelite might perish, though he had his hand on the horn of the altar (1 Kings ii. 25); but if we "flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us," we are safe (Heb. vi. 18). It is this faith in God that gives true fearlessness. Trusting in God and doing good, who can harm us (1 Pet. iii. 13)?

II. **COMFORT IN TROUBLE.** (Vers. 4, 5.) There is an advance here to what is more inward and spiritual—to the Divine consolations of the good. The "river," with its several "streams," typifies those consolations as they are to be found in the Word and ordinances of the gospel and the love of God in Christ Jesus. They are free, affluent, abiding. Other waters may fail (Isa. xix. 5), but they "go on for ever." Like the waters from the rock that followed Israel through all their wanderings, so they are ever beside us and open to us, so that whosoever will may drink and be refreshed. "God is in the midst of her." This is the secret of the whole.

III. **DELIVERANCE FROM TROUBLE.** Trials are needful; they have their purpose, and when it is accomplished they cease. As with the wars that desolate the earth, they are under the control of God. It is for us to be patient and trust. God's time is the best time. It may be dark now, but the dawn of a brighter day is near (ver. 5). There may be conflict and strife now, and as good soldiers of Jesus Christ we must endure hardness; but victory is sure. We are not only to learn patience from what we "behold" of the works of the Lord, but from what we "know" in the secrets of our own experience (vers. 8—10); besides, we have the sure word of prophecy and of promise. "The Lord of hosts is with us;" and if so, greater is he that is for us than all they that can be against us. "The God of Jacob is our Refuge;" and if so, we may be confident that God will keep us in all places whither we go, and will not only sanctify unto us all our trials, but bring us in the end into the land of everlasting peace.—W. F.

**Vers. 1—11.—*A Divine Refuge and Strength.*** The ground-thought is, "God is our Refuge and Strength," and it returns with only a slight change of form at the end of the second and third strophes. The strophes are: vers. 1—3; vers. 4—7; vers. 8—11.

I. **GOD'S RELATION TO US.** 1. *A relation of strength.* (Vers. 6, 7, 9.) 2. *Of intimate nearness.* (Vers. 5, 7.) "In the midst of her." "With us." Immanuel. How near God is to us in Christ! 3. *Of parental tenderness.* "The God of Jacob is our Refuge." Christ calls us "little children," denoting how God feels toward us.

II. **WHAT WE SHOULD BE IN CONSEQUENCE OF SUCH A RELATION.** 1. *Fearless amid the greatest changes.* (Vers. 2, 3.) But evil men have much to fear from God. 2. *Glad or joyful.* (Ver. 4.) God will help "right early," or "in the morning." 3. *Obedient to the omnipotent God.* "Be still" is equivalent to "know what I am, and cease from wars against my people." "He breaketh the bow of the strongest, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."—S.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM XLVII.

THIS is a song of praise to God, as the King of the whole earth. It has been called "one of the *accession psalms*," because it depicts God as assuming his kingdom, and taking his seat upon his throne (vers. 5—8). There is nothing in the psalm that very definitely marks the time of the composition; but it may well be, as Dr. Kay suggests, a psalm in which "Israel collectively acknowledges what David had been allowed to accomplish." The title assigns it to "the sons of Korah," who were among David's chief musicians.

Ver. 1.—O clap your hands, all ye people; rather, *all ye peoples*. The nations of the earth generally—not Israel only—are addressed. The events which have taken place—the great extension of God's kingdom, by David's conquests, are for the advantage of all, and all ought to be thankful for them. Shout unto God with the voice of triumph; or, *with a voice of joy*. Professor Cheyne renders, "in ringing tones."

Ver. 2.—For the Lord Most High is terrible (comp. Deut. vii. 21; and see also Ps. lxxv. 5; lxxviii. 35; lxxvii. 7—9). God is "terrible"—i.e. awful to contemplate—on account of his vast power and his absolute holiness. He is a great King over all the earth. Not only over Israel, or over the nations which David has conquered, but over every nation on the face of the earth (comp. Ps. xov. 3, 4; xvi. 10; xcvii. 1, etc.).

Ver. 3.—He shall subdue the people under us; rather, *he subdues*, or *hath subdued*, *peoples under us*. The reference is to recent victories (comp. Ps. xviii. 47). And the nations (rather, *and nations*) under our feet. David subdued all the nations between the river of Egypt and the Euphrates, and left the inheritance of this kingdom, or rather empire, to Solomon (1 Kings iv. 21).

Ver. 4.—He shall choose our inheritance for us; rather, *he chooseth*, or *hath chosen*, *our inheritance for us*. God originally chose Canaan as the inheritance of his people (Gen. xii. 1—7), and gave it to Abraham. Later on, he enlarged the gift, making the boundaries such as they became under David and Solomon (Gen. xv. 18). The excellency of Jacob whom he loved. The Holy Land is called "the excellency of Jacob," or "the pride of Jacob," on account of its beauty, and the excellence and variety of its productions (see Deut. viii. 7—9; 2 Kings xviii. 22).

Ver. 5.—God is gone up with a shout; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. As God "comes down" when he interposes for the relief or deliverance of his people (Ps. cxliv. 5), so after the relief or deliverance is effected, he is viewed as "going up"—returning to his glorious abode, reoccupying his seat in the heaven of heavens, and there remaining until some fresh call is made upon him. If the interposition has been one of a striking and unusual character, if the relief has been great, the deliverance signal, the triumph accorded to his people extraordinary, then he "goes up with a shout"—amid the exulting cries and loud jubiliations of rescued Israel. When the occasion is such as to call for a public manifestation of thanksgiving at the house of God (2 Chron. xx. 28), then he "goes up" also "with the sound of the trumpet," which was always sounded by the priests on great occasions of festal joy and gladness (see 2 Sam. vi. 15; 2 Kings xi. 14; 1 Chron. xiii. 8; xvi. 42; 2 Chron. v. 12; vii. 6; xxix. 27; Ezra iii. 10; Neh. xii. 35).

Ver. 6.—Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. Praise him, i.e., both as God and King—especially as "*our King*"—that is, as Israel's King.

Ver. 7.—For God is the King of all the earth (comp. ver. 2). Sing ye praises with understanding; literally, *sing a psalm of instruction*. As Hengstenberg remarks, "Every song in praise of God, on account of God, on account of his glorious deeds, contains a rich treasure of instruction and improvement." Here the special instruction is that God is King over the whole earth, that he reigns over the heathen, and that the heathen shall also some time or other own his sovereignty.

Ver. 8.—God reigneth over the heathen. God had manifested his kingly power over the heathen by subduing great numbers of them, and making them subject to Israel. He would one day manifest it still more by bringing *all nations* into his Church. God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The throne from which he exercises a just, a righteous, and a holy rule.

Ver. 9.—The princes of the people (literally, *princes of peoples*) are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham; rather, *to be the people of the God of Abraham* (Revised Version)—i.e. to form, together with Israel, the one people, or Church, of God (comp. Isa. xlix. 18—23). For the shields of the earth belong unto God. The "shields" are the "princes" of the first clause, those whose business it is to

protect and defend their subjects (comp. Hos. iv. 18). The princes of the earth belong especially to God, since "by him kings reign, and princes decree justice" (Prov. viii. 15). At the great ingathering of the Gentiles into the Church, they would belong to him still more, since they would voluntarily place themselves under his rule (Isa. xlix. 23; lx. 3, 11, 16). He is greatly

exalted. The perfect submission to God of all his rational creatures is his highest exaltation and glory. When "*all people* bow down before him," and "*all nations* do him service," when rebellion and resistance to his will are at an end, then will he be established in his rightful position, and his exaltation will be complete.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The faculty and duty of praise.* "Sing praises." Every command of God implies power to obey. True, God often tells us to do what we have no power of ourselves to do; but then he gives power. When Jesus bade the lame walk, the blind see, the paralytic to take up the bed he lay on, and the very dead to come out of the grave, power went with his word. On the other hand, every faculty or power with which God has endowed us implies some duty in which we are to glorify him. Thus the faculty of praising God in song, and the duty of singing praises with understanding, imply one another.

I. THE FACULTY OF PRAISING GOD IN SONG. God might have given speech without song; all the whole world of sound without music. Not a few persons whose sense of hearing is quick and perfect, have no ear for music; they perceive neither melody nor harmony. For them, therefore, it is neither a pleasure nor a duty to sing praises. What is the case with some might have been with all. Music would then have had no existence in our world or in our conceptions. Further, if God had given no more than the ordinary average musical faculty, the wonder and power of music would have remained comparatively unknown. Multitudes can enjoy music, and play or sing, who never could compose a tune. A chosen few must be endowed with that special gift which we call "genius," making them as it were God's prophets to unfold the secret treasure of music he has stored up in nature, above all, in the human voice. Manifestly it was God's purpose in this to give delight. Music furnishes one of the most exquisite, elevating, unwearying pleasures of which our nature is capable. But it does much more. Song and music are a *language* distinct from speech—the language of *feeling*. This language supplies the means by which multitudes may express their thoughts as well as their feelings as with one voice. Let a thousand people speak at once; all thought and feeling are drowned in hubbub. But let them sing together in perfect time and tune; both thought and feeling are raised to a pitch of energy else inconceivable.

II. THE DUTY. "Sing ye praises." This duty has an inner spirit as well as an outer embodiment. There is, after all, no melody like "melody in your heart" (Eph. v. 19). In the service of God's Church, music without devotion, a lovely sound void of heartfelt meaning, is not praise, but profanation. Better omit singing from our service altogether, than have the finest music to the praise and glory, not of God, but of the performers. But when the spirit of praise, the heart and soul of worship, inspires our song, can we be too careful in perfecting its form? There is no spirituality in bad music; no piety in singing praises ignorantly, slovenly, untunefully. "Sing ye praises *with understanding*." If Timothy was "not to neglect the gift," but to "stir up the gift that was in him," the like exhortation applies to whatever gift God has given us for his service. If only the few can lead, most can follow. The attainment of the art of singing by note, and culture of the voice so as to take part in this delightful part of Christian worship with pleasure to ourselves and profit to others, should be regarded as a far more serious duty than commonly it is. Psalmody is capable of being a most powerful means of religious impression and edification (Col. iii. 16). Above all, let us cultivate the spirit of praise; the joyful, thankful, trustful, adoring piety, which finds its natural utterance in song. If *prayer* claims the principal place in our worship on earth, by reason of sin, weakness, need, sorrow,—*praise* brings us nearest to the worship of heaven (Rev. v. 9—13).

Ver. 7.—*Universal dominion.* "God is King of all the earth." We must beware of making too wide a chasm between our sabbath rest and our daily work; devotion and daily duty. The risk is double—of making our religion unreal, and our daily work irreligious. A devout Christian may be tempted to say, "Do not talk to me from the pulpit about earth; talk about heaven! I must launch out again into the rough sea of business and politics to-morrow; let not even the ground-swell disturb the peaceful haven." This is natural enough, but not always well. Our treasure is not on earth, but our work is. The tempter told our Saviour that the kingdoms of this world are delivered to him; but he was sternly rebuked. If he is called "the prince," even "the god of this world," it is a usurped dominion, which it is our business to protest and fight against. "The earth is the Lord's," etc. (Ps. xxiv. 1); "The kingdom is the Lord's" (Ps. xxii. 28).

I. GOD IS THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN OF MANKIND, AS OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE. Supreme authority and almighty power are his—his only. Sin cannot change this. The most absolute and mighty despot on earth would become a helpless captive if his troops and people were unanimous in deposing him. But God's power and authority would be exactly the same if every human being defied it. Disobedience could not last an hour if he saw fit to crush it. But he wills to rule, not by mere power, but by wisdom, righteousness, and love—his own eternal law of being and working.

II. GOD'S REGAL BOUNTY, HIS FATHERLY CARE AND GOODNESS, ARE EXERCISED TOWARDS ALL MEN. (Matt. v. 45; Acts xiv. 17; xvii. 25.) The Laplander in his snow hut, no less than the most cultured child of civilization. If he knows every wild bird and beast (Ps. l. 10—12), and not a sparrow falls unnoticed by him, how much less can one human being, even the guiltiest and most debased, be outside his care!

III. GOD'S IMPERIAL PROVIDENCE CONTROLS ALL HUMAN ACTION. Men rebel against his will, yet his purpose is accomplished (Ps. xxx. 10, 11; Acts iii. 17, 18; 2 Chron. x. 15). Our inability to explain *how* this is possible does not affect the fact. Were it otherwise, God could not govern the world. Conscience and Scripture alike tell us that freedom and responsibility are not interfered with.

IV. GOD RULES AND CARES FOR NATIONS AS SUCH; NOT INDIVIDUALS MERELY. For human history is the history of nations. The nation of Israel, *constructed* (so to speak), educated, governed, blessed, and chastened, as no other has been, holds a unique place in the providence of God and in the religious history of mankind. The full prophetic testimony of this fact is one of the strongest evidences of Old Testament inspiration. In this psalm, *e.g.*, full of national sentiment and triumph, the heathen are regarded, not as conquered foes, but fellow-subjects.

V. THIS REGAL, IMPERIAL RULE IS COMMITTED TO THE LORD JESUS. (Matt. xxviii. 18.) The hands nailed to the cross hold the sceptre of the world (Rev. ii. 26, 27). Not for worldly ends; but for the sake of that higher kingdom, specially called in the New Testament "the kingdom of God;" the rule, namely, of righteousness, truth, and love, for which we pray, "Thy kingdom come."

CONCLUSION. To which kingdom do you belong—does each one of us? only to that to which even the most ignorant belongs, without knowing it; the most wicked, against his will? or that which the Son of God and Son of man lived, died, and rose again to found and to make triumphant, and in whose triumph we may share?

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*A song for all the peoples!* That it is possible this psalm may have been penned immediately after some specific victory, such as that of Jehoshaphat over the formidable combination of peoples that came up against him (2 Chron. xx.), we may admit; but we can scarcely understand how the peoples should have been invited to clap their hands at their own humiliating defeat. And it seems to us altogether unworthy of the sublime elevation of this psalm to look at it solely, or even mainly, from a military point of view, as if all the nations were invited to a song of triumph over their utter powerlessness to prevail against the chosen people of God. Delitzsch remarks, "In the mirror of the present event, the poet reads the great fact of the

conversion of all peoples to Jehovah, which closes the history of the world.”<sup>1</sup> Perowne writes, “This is a hymn of triumph, in which the singer calls upon all the nations to praise Jehovah as their King, and joyfully anticipates the time when they shall all become one body with the people of the God of Abraham.”<sup>2</sup> Canon Cook says, “While celebrating a transaction of immediate interest to God’s people, the psalmist uses expressions throughout which have their adequate fulfilment in the Person and work of the Messiah.”<sup>3</sup> And Dr. Binnie wisely remarks that the invitation to the nations, in the first verse, plainly implies that the subjugation is not a carnal one, but “the yearning of men’s minds and hearts for God.”<sup>4</sup> We are not called on to decide, nor even to ask the question—How much did the human penman of this psalm understand by it? Nor are we to perplex ourselves by asking—How could any human mind forecast all this? For it is not by any law of naturalistic psychology that such a psalm as this is to be tested. The Apostle Peter tells us that “no prophecy of the Scripture comes out of any private interpretation” of the will of God. Nay, further, that the will of man was not the origin of prophecy (2 Pet. i. 21), but that holy men of God spake as they were borne on by the Holy Ghost. He tells us, too (1 Pet. i. 10—12), that they did *not* comprehend the full significance of the words which came from their lips; that they diligently inquired into their meaning; that they uttered them, not for themselves, but for us; that their theme was “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” So that, having this key to the interpretation of the prophetic songs of Scripture, we see that such remarks as those of Cheyne concerning prophecy and psychology<sup>5</sup> are utterly wide of the mark, and that the *sole* question before us is—*What do the words of this psalm declare, when dealt with according to the analogy of faith, concerning the prophetic forecast of the kingdom of the Messiah?*

I. THE WORDS OF THIS PSALM DISCLOSE A GREAT THEME FOR SONG. A theme evidently much vaster and more far-reaching than the results of any material, local, or national triumph could possibly be; for it is one which is calculated to make all peoples<sup>6</sup> clap their hands with joy, which could not possibly be true of any victory on an earthly battle-field. We feel increasingly that the terms of this psalm are intelligible only as referred immediately to the conflict and victory of the great Captain of salvation in undertaking to “save” his people from their sins. As Matthew Poole admirably remarks, “In Psalmo 45 actum est de Rege; in Psalmo 46 de civitate Dei; hic, de Gentium adjunctione ad populum Dei, quam per Christum impletam videmus.”<sup>7</sup> And thus we see how far ahead the expansiveness of the Old Testament predictions was of the narrow exclusiveness of the average Jew. Here there is a celebration of God’s work which brings out expressions of greatest delight. The delight is in a triumphant achievement that will link all nations in one; and the cause of the delight is not their work, but God’s work for them. To nothing but the redemption which is in Christ Jesus could all this possibly apply. Here is a fourfold work of God. 1. *The descent of the King to earth.* In ver. 5 we read, “God is gone up with a shout.” So in Ps. lxxviii. 18, “Thou hast ascended up on high,” etc. In quoting this last-named verse, the Apostle Paul argues (Eph. iv. 9), “Now that he ascended, what is it but that he descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” The ascension implies that he descended. How can it be otherwise here? That God has gone up from earth involves the truth that he was here; and that means that he came down from heaven (so John iii. 13; xvi. 28; xvii. 5, 24; Luke xix. 10; 2 Cor. viii. 9; Phil. ii. 6, 7; 1 Tim. i. 15). The coming of the Son Incarnate into the world is the fact announced in the New Testament, and many times predicted in the Old

<sup>1</sup> ‘Commentary on the Psalms,’ *in loco*.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to his notes on this psalm.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ vol. iv. p. 280.

<sup>4</sup> ‘The Psalms,’ by William Binnie, D.D., ch. ix., ‘The Future Glories of the Church,’ specially § 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Contemporary Review*, August, 1889, article; also in *Contemporary Review*, April, 1890, see a masterly article by Professor Cave, in reply to Cheyne and Driver on the Old Testament and its critics.

<sup>6</sup> Note the plural form as indicated in our Revised Version.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Poli Synopsis Criticorum,’ *in loco*.

Testament (Isa. ix. 6; Gen. xlix. 10; Luke xxiv. 44; Matt. v. 17; John v. 46). How far the psalmist understood the meaning of his own words, we are not called on to say; but the meaning of the Holy Ghost in inspiring them is perfectly clear.<sup>1</sup> 2. *The ascent of the King is also foretold.* (Ver. 5.) The descent, implicitly; the ascent, explicitly. And in this doctrine many of the Old Testament writers blend their words (Pss. lxxviii. 18; cx. 11). The King was to be exalted on high. He is (cf. Acts i. 9; ii. 33; Eph. iv. 10; i. 20; Heb. iv. 14; vi. 20; ix. 24; x. 12). 3. *The exalted King is Sovereign over all the nations.* (Ver. 8.) "The heathen" (Authorized Version) is equivalent to "the nations" (Revised Version). All the nations are under Immanuel's sceptre. Through his death Satan is dethroned, and the Christ enthroned, and every child of man is now under his mediatorial sway. So we are taught in John xii. 31, 32; Acts x. 34, 35. He is now enthroned at the right hand of God; and those hands that were pierced with nails now sway the sceptre of universal power. Yea, and he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet (Ps. cx.). The mediatorial throne is "the throne of his holiness" (ver. 8). In the life of Christ holiness was manifested; in his death, whereby he condemned sin, holiness was vindicated. From his seat above, holiness sways the sceptre; by the power of his Spirit, holiness is created in human spirits. And under the sway of this throne *all nations* are embraced. "Earth's poor distinctions vanish here." "In Christ there is neither Greek, nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." And in him all the peoples of the earth may find their home in Abraham's God (ver. 9). The shields, *i.e.* the princes, of the earth belong unto God. 4. *The King governs the world for the sake of the Church.* (Ver. 3.) So the third verse indicates. The thought is expressed with gospel clearness in Eph. i. 22 and Rom. viii. 28, that out of a sinful world God may call a living Church, to be presented to himself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This is the Divine subjugation of his foes, which the mediatorial sovereignty of Christ ensures.

II. HERE IS A CALL FOR SONG ON THIS GREAT THEME, FROM ALL PEOPLES. Man's sin makes us weep. God's mercy makes us sing; and no aspect thereof makes us gladder than that of the triumph of redeeming grace and loving love. And well may the psalmist, thus forecasting redemption's story through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, call for universal song. Well may we sing; for: 1. *The great conflict is past.* "The voice of triumph" may therefore be ours (cf. Col. ii. 15). 2. *The sceptre of the world is in the hands of One, and of One only.* There is no division of power (ver. 7). 3. *The sceptre of the world is in the hands of the Supreme* (ver. 2).<sup>2</sup> And where else could we desire all power to be lodged (cf. Matt. xxviii. 18; John xvii. 2; Rev. i. 18; Ps. ii. 12)? 4. *There is a rich inheritance in store for the loyal ones.* The Jew expected an earthly inheritance by virtue of his descent from Abraham; but all believers will have an infinitely greater inheritance by virtue of their union with Christ. God chooses it for us; and with his choice we may be well content. He will deal right royally with his own, and will act worthily of a God. For this inheritance we can wait (Rom. viii. 17, 18). 5. In the advance of the Divine plans all barriers between race and race are destined to fall: *All kindreds of the earth are to rally to the standard of Abraham's God!* Nowhere is this breaking down of boundaries more strikingly set forth than in Eph. ii. 12—22, which is an exposition of the basis and structural plan of the Christian commonwealth. This the aged Jacob foretold when he said, "To him shall the gathering of the people be." To this psalmists and seers point. For this the Saviour prayed: "That they all may be one." He died to "gather together in one the children of God which are scattered abroad" (John xi. 52: x. 16; Isa. xlii. 4). At such a thought, "Clap your hands, all ye peoples!"—C.

Vers. 1—9.—*The universal King.* The Lord is here set forth as "King over all the earth." His government commands—

<sup>1</sup> "David's prophecies of the Messiah which are *personal*, arose by suggestion of the Spirit from his own *personal* experience, and include it. His prophecies of Messiah which are *royal* and *kingly*, arose out of his *kingly* experience, and the two persons are interwoven with one another in such a manner as not to be separable" (Edward Irving).

<sup>2</sup> The word "terrible" gives a wrong impression. The word does not mean that God inspires terror, but that he is to be revered for his greatness.

I. THE HOMAGE OF THE INTELLECT. "The Most High" is the Maker of heaven and earth. He is infinitely wise and holy and powerful. Not dependent upon other beings, he rules singly and alone, in supreme majesty. Reason, therefore, not only confesses his right, but his fitness. Here is the repose of the mind in a perfect King.

II. THE ACQUISICENCE OF THE CONSCIENCE. The Lord Most High is "terrible." This does not mean that he is an object of terror, but of reverence. What God does in dealing with the nations is ever the expression of judgment and righteousness. Whether it be in the temple or in the world, in manifesting himself in love to his people or in ruling over the heathen, he is ever just. His government, in its laws and administration, is absolutely pure. The throne on which he is seated is *the throne of his holiness*. Conscience, where it is free, cries, "Amen."

III. THE ADORATION OF THE HEART. "Sing praises." Four times this call is given. This shows both its justice and its universality. To this call, all hearts, "honest and good," respond with joy. The more we study, the better we understand, the character and the rule of God, the more fervently shall we join in the anthem of praise. "Sing praises to God." This is no mere form, no senseless outburst, like that of the men of Ephesus, who for two whole hours cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" (Acts xix. 34). Looking to the past, contemplating the present, imaging the future, we see that, under God, all things are tending towards one great end, and therefore we can sing praises "with understanding." It has been said that "a people's voice is the proof and echo of all human fame." So as truth prevails, and men everywhere are brought under the benign and holy sway of Christ, shall they with glad enthusiasm proclaim the Name and glory of God. Learn, therefore, the evil and the folly of sin. It is rebellion against the Lord Most High! Learn also the real unity of believers. Whatever differences there may be amongst them as regards lesser things, when they utter their hearts in prayer and praise, we find that they are one. The hymns of the Church for ever witness to the unity of the Church. Learn also how all the prophets speak of Christ and his kingdom. Their words had higher meanings than they knew of. Consciously or unconsciously, but moved by the Holy Ghost, they spake of the glories of the latter day.

"Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,  
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,  
Thou who alone art worthy."

W. F.

Ver. 7.—*Christianity the faith of all nations.* Judaism was not fitted for universality. Its rites, its laws as to meats and drinks, its localization of worship, gave it the character of a national rather than a universal religion. Yet it was by Hebrew prophets that the idea of a universal religion was propounded. Taught of God, they were able to rise above what was local and exclusive, and to rejoice in foresight of the latter-day glory, when Jehovah should be "King of all the earth." The fulfilment is in Christ, whose coming was hailed, not only as "King of the Jews," but as the "Light of the Gentiles," and the Saviour of the world. Christianity, not the Christianity of the Creeds or of any particular Church, but the Christianity of Christ, is the faith for all nations. The fact that the Bible is so fitted for translation into all languages; that the rites of the gospel are so simple and so adapted to all countries; that the laws as to Church government are so few, and so capable of being worked out according to the needs of different peoples, might be urged as arguments for universality. But there are other and stronger reasons. Christianity is fitted to be the faith of all nations, because of—

I. ITS REPRESENTATION OF GOD. It has been truly said that "Christianity alone of religions gives a clear, self-consistent, adequate view of God. It alone discloses and promises to man a complete communion with God." The cry of Philip, "Show us the Father," finds in Christ a full response (John xiv. 9). "In creation God is a God above us; in the Law he is a God against us; but in the gospel, he is Immanuel, a God with us, a God like us, a God for us."

II. ITS DOCTRINE OF SALVATION. The evil that presses upon men everywhere is sin. How can it be taken away? The answer is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Our character and life depend upon our beliefs. Belief in Christ not only secures



pardon and reconciliation with God, but restoration of purity. In the Gospels we have not only the doctrine, but facts that authenticate the doctrine. The great conversions of St. Luke (Luke vii. 48; xix. 9, 10; xxiii. 43) are samples of what Christ has done and is doing (1 Tim. i. 15—17), and what he begins he will perfect.

III. ITS IDEAL OF HUMANITY. We have not only the Law, but the life (Matt. v. 1—11; 1 Pet. ii. 21). Christ not only gives us the ideal, but shows us how that ideal may be realized (Matt. xv. 24—27; Titus ii. 11—13). Thus in Christ God comes down to man, and man is raised up to God. The promise is unto all, without respect of persons.

IV. ITS BOND OF BROTHERHOOD. What force, and commerce, and ecclesiasticism, and all human devices failed to do, Christ has done. He treats men simply as men, and by his Spirit binds them together as brethren. The wall of partition is broken down. The divisions formed by pride and selfishness are abolished, and all the world over "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free," but all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 28).

V. ITS CONSOLATIONS AND HOPES. Here there is comfort for every troubled heart. Christ is our Hope. To use the words of Arthur Hallam, "I see that the Bible fits into every fold of the human heart. I am a man, and I believe it to be God's book, because it is man's book."

VI. ITS PROMISE OF IMMORTALITY. This is the climax. Godliness has the promise not only of the life that now is, but of that which is to come. The vision rises bright before every Christian. "Days without night; joys without sorrow; sanctity without sin; charity without stain; possession without fear; society without envying; communication of joys without lessening; and they shall dwell in a blessed country where an enemy never entered, and from which a friend never went away." Therefore we pray with increasing fervour, "Thy kingdom come."—W. F.

Vers. 1—9.—*The universal sovereignty of God.* The occasion of the psalm was, according to ver. 3, an overthrow of many heathen peoples by the visible interposition of God, who had leagued themselves against Israel, and who, according to ver. 4, had set out with the purpose of expelling Israel from her land. Another interpretation is that the psalm was composed for the dedication of the temple on the return from captivity. The main thought is *the universal sovereignty of God*. "God is the King of all the earth." Three thoughts are suggested.

I. GOD CONSTRAINS HIS ENEMIES TO FULFIL HIS PURPOSE. (Vers. 3—8.) 1. *The almighty wisdom and goodness of God bring good out of evil.* "Maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains." 2. *This should be a ground of truth and joy to the whole world.* (Vers. 6, 7.) Evil, therefore, is not absolute and eternal, and cannot be finally victorious over him to whom "the shields of the earth belong." This is the psalmist's thought.

II. GOD HAS CHOSEN AND SECURED THE INHERITANCE OF HIS PEOPLE. (Ver. 4.) The reference here is to the Holy Land. God would not allow the heathen to wrest it from them. 1. *Generally, God has given us a grand destiny in Christ and heaven.* Rest is our inheritance. 2. *He will secure this to all who accept his promises, and faithfully seek for it.* He restored the Jews, who for a time had been disinherited, when they became penitent and forsook their idolatry. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

III. THE GREATEST MEN, KINGS AND LEADERS, SHALL AT LENGTH YIELD THEMSELVES TO GOD. (Ver. 9.) 1. *The kings of thought shall at length bow to Christ as the highest Wisdom.* 2. *The kings of action will acknowledge him as the inspiration of the grandest conduct.* He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, to whom every knee shall bow.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XLVIII.

HERE we have another psalm of thanksgiving for a deliverance, but not apparently for the same deliverance as gave occasion for either of the two preceding psalms. Israel had

now been delivered from a confederacy of kings (ver. 4), who had come within sight of the city, but had then been seized with panic, and retreated, without making an attack (ver. 5). After this, pain had come upon them, and they had been "broken,"

like "ships of Tarshish with an east wind" (vers. 6, 7). The deliverance had been celebrated by a thanksgiving service held in the temple (ver. 9). These details accord remarkably with the account given in 2 Chron. xx. 1—28 of an expedition against Jerusalem, made by the Moabites, Ammonites, and children of Seir, in the reign of Jehoshaphat, who advanced as far as Tekoa, whence Jerusalem is visible (Delitzsch), but there quarrelled among themselves, and began a retreat, in the course of which they came to blows, and destroyed one another. The imagery of "ships of Tarshish broken by the east wind" is naturally used at this period, when Jehoshaphat's fleet of "ships of Tarshish" (2 Kings xxii. 48) was, by a Divine judgment, "broken at Ezion-geber."

The psalm consists of two strophes, nearly of equal length, divided at the end of ver. 8 by the pause-mark, "Selah."

Ver. 1.—Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; rather, *great is the Lord, and greatly is he praised*. The psalmist speaks of what is, not of what ought to be. Jehoshaphat had solemnly praised God for the deliverance from the Moabites and Ammonites, both in the valley of Berachah, when he came upon the bodies of the slain (2 Chron. xx. 26), and in the temple after his return to Jerusalem (2 Chron. xx. 28). In the city of our God (comp. Ps. xli. 4; ci. 8). In the mountain of his holiness. The "holy hill of Zion" (Ps. ii. 6), on which the temple and a great part of the city stood.

Ver. 2.—Beautiful for situation; literally, *for elevation*; i.e. in respect of its lofty position. "Jerusalem, above all other great capitals," says Professor Cheyne, "is a mountain city." "It is a glorious burst," says Canon Tristram, "as the traveller rounds the shoulder of Mount Olivet, and the Haram wall starts up before him from the deep gorge of the Kedron, with its domes and crescenta sparkling in the sunlight—a royal city" ('Land of Israel,' pp. 111, 112). The joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion (comp. Lam. ii. 15). The psalmist writes as a devout Israelite. To him there is nothing in the world so lovely, nothing so gladdening, as Mount Zion and the holy city seated on it. He does not mean to say that all the earth felt as he did; though he may have thought that, if men were wise, they would so feel. On the sides of the north. Professor Cheyne regards this clause as a gloss which has crept into the text. Others give a mystical interpretation founded on Isa. xiv. 15. But the simplest explanation seems to be the best. Zion, the

city of David, lay to the north of the temple, and abutted on the city's northern wall. The city of the great King (comp. ver. 1, "the city of our God").

Ver. 3.—God is known in her palaces for a Refuge; or, *in her castles*. The palaces of the king and his chief nobles are, no doubt, intended.

Ver. 4.—For lo, the kings were assembled; they passed by together. Some see in these "kings" Sennacherib's princes, who, according to him (Isa. x. 8), were "altogether kings." But actual monarchs, each leading his own army, seem rather to be intended.

Ver. 5.—They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. The sight of the city, with its walls and towers (vers. 12, 13), was enough for them—they recognized that the place was too strong to be attacked with any prospect of success; "marvelled," or "were amazed" (Cheyne), at its strength, and, being troubled in mind, hasted away. The unconnected verba remind the commentators of Cæsar's famous despatch, "Veni, vidi, vici."

Ver. 6.—Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. This description is wholly inapplicable to the destruction of Sennacherib's host, unperceived until it was accomplished (2 Kings xix. 35), but is sufficiently in agreement with the narrative of 2 Chron. xx. 1—23.

Ver. 7.—Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. The literal exposition is wholly out of place, since history does not speak of any co-operation of a fleet with a land army in any attack upon Palestine. The expression must be used metaphorically of a great and violent destruction wrought by the arm of God upon Israel's foes. Still, the imagery would scarcely have been used, unless there had been something in the circumstances of the time to suggest it, as there certainly was in Jehoshaphat's time, whose fleet of "ships of Tarshish" was "broken" at Ezion-geber (2 Kings xxii. 48). The poet may have witnessed the catastrophe.

Ver. 8.—As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God; i.e. as we have heard of former deliverances of Jerusalem from the attacks of enemies; e.g. from Shishak (2 Chron. xii. 2—12), from Zerah (2 Chron. xiv. 9—13), so now we have seen with our own eyes a deliverance of the same favoured city, such as might be expected from the fact that she is "the city of the Lord of hosts, the city of our God." Having seen with our own eyes Jerusalem thus delivered, we come to the conclusion that God will establish it for ever.

Ver. 9.—We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

Jehoshaphat, on his return to Jerusalem from the scene of his adversaries' slaughter, held a thanksgiving service in the temple, "with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets," because the Lord had made the people to rejoice over their enemies (2 Chron. xx. 27, 28).

Ver. 10.—According to thy Name, O God, so is thy praise. The "Name of God," i.e. the character that he has established for himself by former mighty deeds, and the praise which he has now won by the recent deliverance, are coextensive. Both of them reach unto the ends of the earth; i.e. over all the regions known to the writer. Thy right hand is full of righteousness. Thou hast dealt out a righteous judgment by thy right hand and thy stretched-out arm, thereby showing how full thy right hand is of justice and judgment.

Ver. 11.—Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad; i.e. let there be a chorus of joyful thanks over the length and breadth of the land, not only in Jerusalem, but in every city of Judah (Josh. xv. 45) equally. Because of thy judgments. Because thou hast vindicated thy people, and executed judgment on their enemies.

Ver. 12.—Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Admire, i.e., O Israelites, your glorious city, which God has preserved for you intact. Walk around it, view it on every side; observe its strength and beauty. Nay, count its towers, and see how many they are, that ye may form a true estimate of its defences, which

render it well-nigh impregnable. Such a survey would "tend to the glorifying of the God of Israel, and to the strengthening of their faith" (Hengstenberg).

Ver. 13.—Mark ye well her bulwarks (or, her ramparts), consider her palaces. Note the height and fine masonry of her outer wall, which no people could destroy except the Romans (Neh. i. 3; ii. 13—17; iv. 6). And note also the grand houses of her princes and nobles (Amos vi. 11), which show themselves even above the ramparts. That ye may tell it to the generation following. That ye may let them know "how splendid Jerusalem appeared on the morrow of its great danger" (Cheyne).

Ver. 14.—For this God (i.e. the God who has now delivered us) is our God for ever and ever; i.e. he will always remain faithful to us, as we will to him. He will be our Guide even unto death. Dr. Kay translates "even *over* death," and understands that God's loving protection is promised to the faithful even in the land beyond the grave. But he stands alone in this interpretation. Most moderns question whether the words *נֶפֶשׁ* are any part of the psalm, and, comparing them with the *לֵב* of the title to Ps. ix., suggest that they are a mere musical notation. But the psalm would end abruptly without the words, and the meaning, "he will be our Guide unto death," is quite satisfactory (so Hengstenberg and the Revised Version).

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 9.—*God's loving-kindness.* "We have thought of thy loving-kindness." Thought is quick. A lightning-flash of thought, a momentary recollection of God, may give guidance to take the right step, courage to speak the right word, strength to withstand sudden temptation, comfort when we are ready to give up all as lost. But this swift inspiration, sudden illumination, is not the kind of thought of which this text speaks. It is calm meditation, devout; leisurely contemplation. Memory spreads her stores. Faith, hope, love, drink full draughts from the living well of truth. Prayer and praise have time to clothe themselves in fit words. While we muse, the fire burns. One of the greatest blessings of the sabbath is the opportunity for such prolonged, undisturbed thought. One of the richest fruits of the public service of God's house, and of the ministry of God's Word, is reaped when we are led to *think of God's loving-kindness.*

I. The Revisers have wisely retained THIS BEAUTIFUL WORD "LOVING-KINDNESS," although the same Hebrew word is frequently translated "mercy" (sometimes also "goodness," or "kindness"). We could ill afford to lose it, for no other English word so happily expresses one of the most wonderful and delightful aspects of Divine mercy, goodness, or kindness; viz. *its special application to individuals.* The Bible alone sheds this ray of Divine glory on the path of human life. We do not find it in heathen religions, for men do not naturally think thus of God. Science cannot reveal it; for science deals with what is universal or general, not with individuals. We learn it by faith and experience. The *histories* of Scripture are full of it; e.g. Hagar in the desert; Eliezer at the well; Jacob at Bethel, at Haran, at Peniel; Elijah in the famine; Ezra at Ahava (Ezra viii. 21, 22). The *miracles* of Scripture are largely

concerned in this lesson. Miracles are but lessons *writ large*, that none may be able to mistake their meaning. The *promises* of the Bible abundantly announce the same truth; and the *thanksgivings* (in the Psalms and elsewhere) of those whose faith has tested those promises, bear witness to their fulfilment. So does the experience of God's children in all ages.

II. THIS SPECIAL VIEW OF GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS TO INDIVIDUALS MUST NOT NARROW OR OBSCURE OUR VIEW OF HIS MERCY AND LOVING-KINDNESS ON THE BROAD SCALE—to his Church and to mankind. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Ps. xxxiii. 5, *same Hebrew word*; Luke vi. 35, 36; John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9). The "glad tidings of great joy," the gospel, is in the heart of it the message that God loves us. The transcendent proof, the gift of his Son, while it casts all lesser gifts into the shade, is the assurance of them all (Rom. viii. 32).

III. CONTEMPLATION OF GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS IN ALL THESE ASPECTS—devout, thankful meditation on it, is at once a *delight* and a *duty*. A duty, because gratitude demands it (Ps. ciii. 2), because God wills it and is honoured thereby (Ps. cxi. 2—4), because thus the roots of our love and piety are nourished, and our doubts answered. But a duty that can be practised only by those to whom it is a delight. For really to apprehend God's loving-kindness without having our heart opened to its gladness and brightness, as the flower to the sunshine, is impossible. Love only apprehends love (1 John iv. 8). What richer, sweeter, more glorious object of contemplation is possible?

IV. THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS, NEVER OUT OF SEASON, IS ESPECIALLY SEASONABLE IN THE SANCTUARY. "In the temple." Here Asaph got quit of his doubts, and felt his faith and joy revive (Ps. lxxiii. 17, 28). Christian places of meeting and worship are not called "temples" in the New Testament. But Christian people are (2 Cor. vi. 16). The material temple present to the psalmist's thought, with all its glorious ritual and local sanctity, has vanished like a vision. Not because the Gospel has put us further from God, but because it has brought us nearer. The cross has hallowed the whole earth as the outer court of the temple, of which heaven is the sanctuary; and we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. How rich are the poorest who know that this portion is theirs, the loving-kindness of the Lord! How poor the richest without this! Let our meditation of him be sweet! Let us be glad in the Lord!

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*God's own Church the object of his special care.* In this psalm, which is both song and psalm, and is one of those "for the sons of Korah," there is a general theme, illustrated by a reference to some historic event. The general theme is the loving-kindness and care of God over his Church. The specific historic illustration it is not possible to fix with certainty, although the preponderance of opinion, and also the largest amount of probability, seems to incline towards the wondrous repulse of Edom, Ammon, Moab, and others, in answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer, without Israel having to fight in the battle (see 2 Chron. xx.). We see from the narrative of the Chronicles that the children of the Korahites sang a song of praise on the occasion of that signal interposition of God, although it is not likely that the song *then* sang was the forty-eighth psalm; for the reference in ver. 7 is against that; and at first it is not easy to see how "ships of Tarshish" should come to be mentioned in this song, if prepared with reference to the event of which we have made mention. Ezekiel (xxvii. 25, 26) makes mention of ships of Tarshish which belonged to Tyre, being "broken" by the east wind; and it is *possible* that the psalm may have an allusion thereto. But, singularly enough, the chapter that records Jehoshaphat's prayer and deliverance records also his defection and its punishment; and we are told that *his* ships were broken so that they were not able to go to Tarshish (2 Chron. xx. 35—37). If this be the reference in the song before us, its significance would be very striking; in that case, it would mean that Jehovah, Israel's God, who put the heathen to flight for Israel's sake, put even Israel to shame when her people or her kings left the straight path of reliance on and obedience to God alone: and that this was among the "judg-

ments" of him whose right hand is full of righteousness; showing us that God's care for his Church is just as marked when he rebukes her for her sins as when he delivers her from her foes; and that both for his faithful chastisement as for his mighty interposition, his loving-kindness is rehearsed in his temple with gratitude and song.<sup>1</sup> And there is a holy pride in rehearsing the privileges of Zion as far outweighing those of the nations around—a pride, however, which refers all the honour and glory of Zion to God, and to God alone.<sup>2</sup> Interesting, however, as these historic allusions are to the student, the higher spiritual bearing of the psalm is far more interesting, and far more important, as it sets before us this theme—the *privilege and honour of the Church of God*.<sup>3</sup> We need not here argue the point that the Christian Church is the successor to the honours and privileges of the Jewish Church. A comparison of Exod. xix. 6 with 1 Pet. ii. 9 will show this. The Christian Church, in its largest sense, is made up of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. The organization of distinct and definite communities as Churches is a necessity for the time now present, but no such organizations include all believers; many believers, moreover, are in no such organization at all; only "the Lord knoweth them that are his;" and over all such his care is exercised: in their totality as including all regenerated souls, they make up the Church of God. Of this Church as a unity we have now to speak.

I. GOD'S DWELLING-PLACE IS IN HIS CHURCH. (Vers. 1, 2.) It is quite possible that, after what we have just said about the Church in its entirety and vastness, and about the impossibility of its being scanned by any human eye, that it may be said, "But if the Church is thus undefinable by us as to its limits, we cannot conceive of it as a dwelling-place." This we can easily understand. But the demur has, in reality, no force. For it is quite clear from the New Testament that as there is "the Church" in the highest spiritual sense, so there are local and organized Churches in the geographical sense. Of this the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia are immediate and sufficient proof. And wherever a Church is faithful to its Lord, since whatever is true of the whole Church is true of any part of it, the believers in Jesus who belong to any local and faithful Church may apply to themselves that which Paul declared of the Ephesian converts when he wrote, "Ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Thus no Christian need hesitate to apply the words to the fellowship of believers to which he belongs; he may say, "God is known in our palaces for a Refuge." This Church is a city of the great King. And the real presence of a living Saviour among us is our honour, our joy, our life (Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20).

II. GOD HIMSELF IS THE REFUGE OF THE CHURCH. (Ver. 3.) It is the privilege of the individual believer, in all times of trial, sorrow, and care, to betake himself to his God and Saviour as to an unfailing Friend. But this privilege rises to sublimity when a whole company of believers, encompassed with peril and threatened by foes from without, can all rush to their Saviour in faith and prayer, as to a Refuge from the gathering storm!

III. GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS IS THE THEME OF THE CHURCH. (Ver. 9.) How much fuller and sweeter is this theme for meditation now than of old! Then it was gained through prophets; now from him before whose presence lawgiver and prophet retire, as stars are concealed in the brightness of the sun! How incomparably does Rom. viii. surpass aught in the Old Testament! And what was there in the olden time so tender as Luke xv.? Verily such a theme lifts the soul heavenward, tunes the lips to song, and speeds the feet to run the race set before us.

IV. GOD'S DELIVERANCES MARK THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH. (Vers. 4—8.) The effect of this vivid description is pictorial. We can almost see the kings eyeing Jerusalem with envy, plotting her capture, seized with panic and hurrying away as for very life. The psalmist says that he had *heard* of such deliverances in times past, and now had *seen* them. And any student of Church history who has been withal for fifty years a close observer of Church life, can say the same. That God is the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Binnie, pp. 84, 85, and Rev. A. R. Fausset, pp. 205—208, have some deeply interesting remarks on this psalm and its historic reference.

<sup>2</sup> Dean Perowne's remarks on the wide contrast between the Greeks ascribing the glory of their city to man, and the Hebrews ascribing all glory to God, are very striking.

<sup>3</sup> See Bishop Alexander's 'Bampton Lectures,' lect. v., on the images under which the Church is described in the Psalms.

perpetual Deliverer of his Church is the story of the past and the testimony of the present. Nor may we forget the double kind of deliverance: (1) from foes without; (2) from mischief within. If the view given above of ver. 7 is correct, the verse suggests that the Church owes quite as much to God's chastening love in correcting her for her sins, as to his rescuing power in spoiling her foes. That he will do this is part of the covenant (Ps. lxxxix. 28—33).

V. THE HONOUR OF GOD'S NAME IS HIS OWN PLEDGE TO THE CHURCH. (Vers. 10, 11.) In the attribute of God's righteousness is the Church's repose and glory. Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, faithfulness, justice, righteousness, can be the supports of sinful men. This is the supreme wonder of redeeming grace. Think of it! *Sinful people rejoicing that God's right hand is full of righteousness!*

VI. GOD'S GRACIOUS RELATIONS ARE THE GUARANTEE OF THE PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH. (Vers. 12—14.) We omit the italic "it" in ver. 13 (Authorized Version), and translate the first word in ver. 14 "that." The psalmist incites to a study of Zion's towers, bulwarks, palaces, privileges, that it may be declared to the generation following, that "this God is our God for ever and ever." And when we study the redemption in Christ which has founded the Church, the spiritual power which is building up the Church, the watchful providence which has for eighteen centuries guarded the Church, the story which we have to hand down to the coming generation is the same, but told with vaster emphasis, surer faith, and more rapturous joy. "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our Guide above death,<sup>1</sup> and beyond it!" "Happy is the people that is in such a case! yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!"—C.

Vers. 1—14.—*The Church and her Head.* This psalm may teach us something of—

I. THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH. The outward is the symbol of the inward. The glory of the Church is not material, but *moral*. Mind is of all things the greatest. One soul is infinitely more precious than the richest domains. Think of some great man—Newton, Bacon, or Shakespeare. If all the wealth in that one mind could be yours, would you not choose it rather than the grandest of earthly inheritances? And how rich is the Church in mind! "The glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs," are here; and here also are thousands and tens of thousands whose names have been unknown on earth, but are written in heaven. The Church, like Jerusalem, is set on high, but her beauty is not in "situation," but in character; her "elevation" is not in outward advantages, but in nearness to God. She has the "righteousness which exalteth." 1. The glory of the Church is *not limited, but universal*. Jerusalem was for a single people, but the Church is for all nations and kindreds and tongues. The light that dwells in her is to shine forth to all lands. The moral power that centres in her is to radiate its gracious influences to the ends of the earth. Jerusalem had her daughters—in the towns and villages of Judah; but the Church's daughters are to be found in every land under the sun. 2. The glory of the Church is *not transitory, but eternal*. It is not like the passing shows of earthly kings; nor is it short-lived and disappointing, like the glory of Jerusalem. It derives its being from God, and will endure while God endureth. Love and goodness can never die. Much of the glory of the Church is as yet hidden. There were mysteries in the days of Paul, and there are mysteries still. But the light will shine more and more to the perfect day. The past—"what we have heard," the present—"what we have seen," alike bear witness, and combine to raise our hopes of the coming glory.

II. THE GREATNESS OF THE CHURCH'S HEAD. "Great." (Ver. 1.) The measure of the glory of the Church is the greatness of the Church's Head. The certainty of the glory of the Church in all its transcendent developments, is to be found in the greatness of the Church's Head (Eph. i. 17—23). 1. *In the might of his power.* His enemies shall lick the dust (vers. 4—8). Sooner or later, either with the joy of love or the torments of fear, the confession must be made—that "he is Lord" (Phil. ii. 10, 11). 2. *In the sweetness of his loving-kindness.* (Ver. 9.) There is a fitness of place ("temple") and a fitness of method ("wait"). As we keep our ears open, truth will come to us. As we bend our minds in eager thought upon Divine things, more

<sup>1</sup> See the various critics on the words in ver. 14, *מת-על*.

and more of the Lord's goodness will be revealed to us. It is the "loving-kindness" of God that has blessed the past, and it will, in like manner, but in larger measure, bless the future. God's loving-kindness culminated in the cross. There could be nothing higher. And the cross is the best help to our faith, and the surest guarantee of our hopes (Rom. v. 8—10). 3. *In the righteousness of his judgments.* (Vers. 10—13.) The heathen fabled that Jove's hands were full of thunderbolts; but our God's "right hand is full of righteousness." Let us *praise God for freedom*. There were terrors, but they have passed. We have the glad sense of escape. We are free. It is God who has done it. Let us *give thanks for Divine protection*. Jerusalem had her towers and bulwarks. Round about her stood the everlasting hills. She seemed impregnable. But in the evil day of unbelief she fell. But the defences of God's people are better far, and can never be overthrown. Our "bulwarks" are not rampart and tower, but God's love and faithfulness. There will be assaults in the future as in the past, but the foundation standeth sure. There will be many a sore fight and struggle, but the powers against us can never prevail over the omnipotence of God. Let us *rejoice in the everlasting love of God* (vers. 13, 14). We should think of others as well as ourselves. We have a duty to our children and those who come after us. Musing on what God has done for us, our hearts will burn within us, and we shall be able to "tell" the generation following "the wonderful works of God." It is with exulting faith that we claim "*this God*" as "*our God*," and commend his love and his truth to others. What he has been to us he can be to them, and *more*. For ourselves we "know whom we have believed." He will keep us all our days. Our Guide into death, he will be our Portion and our Joy for ever.—W. F.

**Vers. 1—14.—The eternal city of God.** A patriotic hymn, to be sung in the temple service in celebration of a signal deliverance of Jerusalem from an invading army. Commentators are not agreed as to *what* army. Let it be taken as suggesting some things which may be said of the true eternal *city of God*, what it is, and what it will become through everlasting ages, exhibiting the greatest glory of man and the highest glory of God.

**I. SOCIETY FOUNDED AND BUILT UP IN HOLINESS.** (Ver. 1.) Nothing unclean can permanently dwell in it. The heavenly Jerusalem.

**II. FILLED THROUGHOUT WITH DIVINE JOY.** (Ver. 2.) "God shall wipe away all tears." No permanent sorrow.

**III. ETERNALLY SAFE FROM DANGER OF OVERTHROW.** (Ver. 3.) Often threatened during her earthly history by the combined forces of evil which have been arrayed against her.

**IV. GOD HAS EXPENDED THE GRANDEST POWERS OF HIS NATURE IN BUILDING IT UP.**  
1. *Moral omnipotence.* (Vers. 4—8.) The history of past times and personal experience testify to this. He breaks the forces of evil as he broke the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. 2. *It has been and is the theatre for the display of the infinite love.* (Ver. 9.) "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." 3. *Also for the fullest display of the Divine righteousness.* (Vers. 10, 11.) "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." 4. *He is the everlasting Guide and Light of the city.* (Ver. 14.) Because he is its King and Father and Lawgiver. Here is a theme for grateful thanksgiving and joy and worship.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM XLIX.

THIS is a didactic poem, and resembles in some respects Pss. xxxvii. and lxxiii. It deals with the same problem—the contrast between the lot of the righteous man, whom the wicked persecute continually (ver. 5), and these wicked themselves, who are

wealthy and prosperous, found families, leave them their wealth, and even "call their lands after their own names" (vers. 6, 10, 11). The problem is solved, more distinctly than anywhere else in the Psalms, by the doctrine of compensation in a future life (vers. 15, 19), so that (as Hupfeld says) the psalm "contains a real, though crude

and imperfect, theodicy." The wicked man has his good things in this life, and after death evil things, while with the good man the case is exactly the contrary. The date of the psalm is uncertain; but from its style it may be placed between the time of David and that of Hezekiah. The ascription of it to "the sons of Korah" deserves acceptance.

Metrically, the composition divides itself into three portions: (1) a short prelude, or introduction (vers. 1—4); (2) a strophe, forming the main body of the psalm (vers. 5—15); and (3) a summing-up, or conclusion (vers. 16—20).

Ver. 1.—Hear this, all ye people; rather, *all ye peoples*. Like Ps. xlvii., this psalm is addressed to the nations generally, who are all equally interested in it. The writer regards his mission as not confined to Israel, but extending to the whole of mankind. Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world; literally, *of the fleeting* (לִפְנֵי הַזֶּמֶן), of this fleeting, transitory scene.

Ver. 2.—Both high and low, rich and poor, together. The teaching of the psalm concerns all ranks alike. To the great and rich it will carry warning; to the poor and lowly, consolation.

Ver. 3.—My mouth shall speak of wisdom (comp. Job xxxiii. 3, 4). It is not his own "wisdom" that the psalmist is about to utter, but a wisdom communicated to him from without, to which he has "to incline his ear" (ver. 4). And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding; or, of discernment (Kay).

Ver. 4.—I will incline mine ear to a parable. The psalmist is "like a minstrel who has to play a piece of music put into his hands. The strain is none of his own devising; and as he proceeds, each note awakes in him a mysterious echo, which he would fain catch and retain in memory" (Kay). A "parable" in the Old Testament means any enigmatical or dark saying, into which much metaphor or imagery is introduced, so that it is only *φανέρωται*. I will open my dark saying upon the harp; i.e. with a harp accompaniment. Music was a help to inspired persons in the delivery of messages which they were commissioned to deliver (see 1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Kings iii. 15).

Vers. 5—15.—The prelude, or introduction, being over, the substance of the "dark saying" is now brought forth. The problem is propounded. On the one hand are the righteous, fallen upon evil days, surrounded by treacherous foes, ever on the watch to do them a mischief (ver. 5); on the other are

the wicked, "trusting in their wealth, and boasting themselves in the multitude of their riches" (ver. 6), so opulent that they build houses which they expect to "continue for ever," and proprietors on such a scale that their lands are "called after their names" (ver. 11); and both parties equally short-lived, soon swept away from earth (vers. 10, 12). How is it that God allows all this, and how is man to reconcile himself to it? Simply by two reflections—one, that for the wicked, who have their portion in this life, there is no hope of happiness after death (vers. 14, 17); and the other that "God will redeem the righteous from the power of the grave, and will receive them" (ver. 15).

Ver. 5.—Wherefore should I fear in these days of evil? i.e. have I reason to fear, or may I trust in God's protection? Are, or are not, the righteous under his care? When the iniquity of my heels; rather, *of my supplanters*—of those that would trip me up. Shall compass me about; i.e. surround me, lie in wait for me on every side (comp. Ps. xvii. 10—12).

Ver. 6.—They that trust in their wealth; rather, *even of them that trust in their wealth*. The sense runs on from the preceding verse (so Hengstenberg and Professor Cheyne). And boast themselves in the multitude of their riches. Such men are always persecutors of the righteous. They are worldly, carnal, godless.

Ver. 7.—None of them can by any means redeem his brother. The text is suspected. If we read *תִּקַּח* for *תִּקַּח*, with Ewald and Professor Cheyne, the right translation will be, *Nevertheless, no man can by any means redeem himself*. With all his boasting, the rich man cannot effect his own redemption; nor, however great his wealth, can he give to God a ransom for him; i.e. for himself. "Brother" is not used in the Psalms in the sense of "fellow-man," but only in the literal sense of close blood relation (Pss. xxxv. 14; l. 20).

Ver. 8.—For the redemption of their soul is precious; or, *costly*—too costly, i.e., for them, however rich they may be, to be able to effect it (comp. Job xxxvi. 18, 19). And it ceaseth for ever; rather, *and one must let that alone for ever* (Cheyne, Kay, Hengstenberg, Revised Version).

Ver. 9.—That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. This verse is to be closely connected with ver. 7, ver. 8 being parenthetical. It describes the effect which the payment of a ransom by the rich, were it possible might be expected to have.

Ver. 10.—For he seeth that wise men die,



likewise the fool and the brutish person perish. The rich man must see that any hope of ransoming himself by means of his wealth, and so escaping death and the grave, is vain, since the law of mortality, which is in operation all around him, is universal. No one is redeemed from death, in the sense of escaping "the first death." Not only do "the fool and the brutish person" perish, but the fate of "the wise" is the same. All die; all quit the earth; all leave behind them everything that they possessed on earth; no one can take with him the gold in which he has trusted (ver. 6); all leave their wealth to others.

Ver. 11.—Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations. Still, though they know this, the rich and worldly have an idea—an "inward thought"—which they cherish, that they can in a certain sense escape death by founding families and leaving to their children substantial houses, which will keep up the family reputation, and accumulating landed estates, to which they may affix their name, so keeping their memories alive to future ages. They call their lands after their own names (see Gen. x. 2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 29, etc.; and compare the Greek traditions with respect to Hellen, Ion, Achæus, Pelops, Cadmus, etc.). To call cities after their own names, or the names of their sons, was a still commoner practice of great men in the olden times (Gen. iv. 17; xi. 31; Exod. i. 11; 'Records of the Past,' vol. i. p. 12; vol. iii. pp. 45, 92, 112; vol. vii. pp. 32, 39, etc.).

Ver. 12.—Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not. Against these "inward thoughts" and outward actions, the psalmist simply maintains the ground already taken (ver. 10): "Man, in whatever honour he may be, abideth not"—has but a short time to live. He is like the beasts that perish. He has no more continuance than many of the beasts; like them, he passes from earth.

Ver. 13.—This their way is their folly; or, *their vain conceit* (Kay). By "their way" must be understood the course of conduct described in vers. 7—12. Yet their posterity approve their sayings. Their descendants, or those who come after them, notwithstanding the foolishness of their course, adopt their principles and delight in them.

Ver. 14.—Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them. With the foolish fancies and vain conceits of the ungodly rich men, the psalmist now contrasts the reality. When they die they are "laid in the grave," or "ranged in Hades" (Kay), as sheep in a sheepfold. There is no escape for them. Death is their shepherd; he keeps them, watches over them, tends

them, allows none to quit the fold. And the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. When the resurrection morn comes—and no other explanation appears to be possible (see even Cheyne)—it will bring them no release; the righteous will then "have domination over them," and will certainly not set them free (Rev. xxi. 8). And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling; rather, *and their beauty is for Hades to consume out of its dwelling*; i.e. its clay tenement (so Dr. Kay).

Ver. 15.—But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave. Here is the solution of the "dark saying," the key to the "parable." The souls of the righteous will be redeemed, not by themselves, but by God—they will be delivered "from the power of the grave," or rather of Hades; and, while the ungodly are held under by death and the grave (ver. 14), they will be released, and enter upon a higher life. For he shall receive me. As God "took Enoch," when he "was not" (Gen. iv. 24)—took him to be with himself—so he will "receive" every righteous soul, and take it home, and give it rest and peace in his own dwelling-place. As Professor Cheyne observes, "It is the weakest of explanations to say that the psalmist rejoices thus in the prospect of mere deliverance from the danger of death. A few years later, and the prospect will return in a heightened form." The fact is that "the poet has that religious intuition which forms the kernel of the hope of immortality." At the same time, we may admit, as Hupfeld argues, that the belief in immortality is "not here stated as a revealed doctrine, but as a presentiment, a deep inward conviction, inseparable from real living faith in a living God."

Vers. 16—20.—The conclusion "repeats and confirms the general lessons of the psalm." Ver. 16 is a categorical answer to the doubt propounded in ver. 5. Vers. 17—19 are an echo of ver. 14, and at the same time a counterpoise to the views put forth in vers. 6, 11. Ver. 20 is a repetition, but with an important modification, of ver. 12.

Ver. 16.—Be not thou afraid when one is made rich (see vers. 5, 6). There is no ground for fear, nor even for perplexity, when the wicked grow rich and prosper. Their wealth will not ransom their souls (vers. 7—9). They cannot take it with them to another world (ver. 17). They will have no advantage from it there. On the contrary, their misery in another world will be so much as to far outweigh any enjoyment which they may have had on earth (vers. 14, 19). When the glory of his house is increased (see ver. 11).

Ver. 17.—For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away. Nothing in the way of earthly possessions—nothing but the qualities which he has imprinted on his soul, and made part and parcel of himself. The heathen nations, foolishly, were accustomed to bury clothes, and arms, and vessels, and stores of gold with the departed, as though they could take these with them into the other world (see the author's 'Herodotus,' vol. iii. pp. 59—62, and notes 9, 1, 2). The writer of the psalm, and those whom he addressed, were equally aware of the foolishness of such customs. His glory shall not descend after him. Whatever "glory" his wealth has secured to him in this life shall be left behind. He shall be imprisoned in Sheol, with death to shepherd him (ver. 14), and with no hope of returning to the "light" (ver. 19).

Ver. 18.—Though while he lived he blessed his soul (comp. Ps. x. 3; Luke xii. 19). He thought himself happy, and congratulated himself on his good fortune. And men will praise thee, when thou deest well to thyself. A parenthetical remark. Not only do such men congratulate themselves, but the world's applause follows on them. So long as they are well-to-do, and keep themselves in the forefront of the battle of life, they will have

"honour, reverence, and troops of friends," who will admire them and flatter them.

Ver. 19.—He shall go to the generation of his fathers. In the Hebrew it is "thou shalt go," or "it (the soul) shall go;" but the meaning is well expressed by the Authorized Version. However much the wicked man delights in his life, and clings to it, nevertheless he has to die (ver. 10), to join the "generations of his fathers," to go where they have gone before him. And, once in Sheol (ver. 14), they shall never see light. God will redeem the soul of the righteous from the power of Sheol (ver. 15); but the rich ungodly man, and those to whom he goes—men of his sort—shall for evermore *not see light*.

Ver. 20.—Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish. In ver. 12 the writer had said of all men, that they are "like the beasts that perish," which is true in one sense; *i.e.* in reference to this life. Now, having taken a loftier flight, and embraced in his mental vision the whole life of man, he makes an important qualification of what he had said. All men die; but only those who are "without understanding" die without hope—"like the beasts;" for others there remains the hope enunciated in ver. 15.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 8.—*Infinite redemption*. "The redemption," etc. The same astonishing spectacle presents itself to this unknown psalmist which so sorely perplexed his brother psalmist, Asaph—"the prosperity of the wicked." But instead of being "envious at the foolish," or finding a painful enigma in their wealth and pride, he summons men of all lands—rich or poor, high or lowly—to listen while he "opens his dark saying," expounds the riddle. The world's pageant is transparent to the prophet's eye. Behind it are eternal realities. The shadow of death dims its glory. Death, like a spectral shepherd, waits by the grave's mouth to gather his flock. What can, then, the rich man's wealth avail (vers. 7—9)? Primarily, then, these words refer to the present life—the impotence of wealth and earthly glory to ward off death. But in ver. 15 clearly "soul" means more than the life that now is—even a life of which this is but shadow and prelude, and a "second death." Following out, therefore, the thought of the text, we have (1) the infinite value of the soul, and its need of redemption; (2) the infinite cost at which it has been redeemed; (3) the infinite issues of the redemption of a soul.

I. GOD BESTOWED IN THE BEGINNING AN INFINITE VALUE ON THE SOUL OF MAN. Man was made in the image of God, capable of knowing, loving, obeying, resembling his Maker. His complex nature has its lower side—"of the earth, earthy." His animal frame allies him to the lower creatures (vers. 12, 20). Learned leaders of science in our day are labouring to emphasize this side of humanity. Man, they say, has grown up from lower forms—is but a glorified, highly developed ape. "But there is a spirit in man" (Job xxxii. 8). This spiritual nature laughs to scorn the attempt to class it with "beasts that perish," and claims its Divine birthright (Acts xvii. 29). Enoch and Abraham, David, Isaiah, John, Paul, had something within them of which there is no trace, no speck or germ, in the lower ranks of life. So, too, has the humblest Christian—nay, the lowest savage, if but his heart will open to the message of God in Jesus. 1. God *loves the soul*—fallen, sinful, at enmity with him though it is, and justly condemned—yes, with infinite love (John iii. 16). It is in ruins; but

these are the ruins of God's temple. It is lost, but not irredeemably. He has "found a ransom" (cf. Luke xv. 24). 2. The *greatness of man's* nature is proved by the very greatness of his ruin. Only from an exalted height could he fall so terribly. Beasts are not capable of sin. Low, materialistic views of our nature necessarily involve slight views of sin. God's great love, in place of implying indulgence or indifference to sin, is the very measure of his abhorrence, because sin has (1) defaced his likeness; (2) robbed him of men's love and trust; (3) broken his highest law; (4) destroyed man's happiness.

II. THEREFORE "THE REDEMPTION OF THE SOUL IS PRECIOUS;" AND AT AN INFINITE COST IT HAS BEEN EFFECTED. That there *is* such redemption the psalmist was assured. The faith of Old Testament saints was no doubt imperfect. The guiding light shone dimly. Yet now and then flashes out a gleam of startling brightness (Job xxxiii. 23—28). For us the light shines clear (Matt. xx. 28). Cast away from these words—"ransom," "cost," "price," and the like—all narrow (and as it were commercial) associations. Remember the Father not only accepts, but provides, the propitiation; the atonement is his eternal purpose; "the Lamb of God" is "his unspeakable Gift" (1 John iv. 9, 10).

III. THE ISSUES OF THIS REDEMPTION ARE INFINITE. "It ceaseth for ever;" or else "endures for ever" (Heb. ix. 12; x. 26; John x. 27, 28; Rom. viii. 35—39; John iii. 18, 19, 36).

Every preacher must judge for himself whether to bring into the pulpit one of the most serious controversies of the day—the ultimate fate of those whom Scripture describes as "lost," "perishing." Who would not wish to entertain, if he could, what is called "the larger hope"? But if it is to be realized, it must be by means unrevealed in Scripture, and upon principles and laws contrary to those which in this life form and fix character for good or evil. The soul which is hardened in hatred to God and goodness, gnawed with the feverish thirst of depraved appetites, and bound in the fetters of vicious habit, carries within it the elements of a present hell. The danger is real and great, that in peering into the far-off future, beyond the day of judgment, attention should be diverted from such plain warnings as Matt. x. 28; John viii. 24.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—20.—"*A dark saying:*" *wealth in bad hands.* The author and the date of this psalm are alike unknown. There are, however, matters concerning it of much more importance, which we do know. One of these is that the writer was a believer in God; and that while the dark problems of life perplexed him, as they do and have done so many others, he saw light above and beyond them. Another is that in this psalm we have the words of one who had "inclined his ear" to hear what the great Speaker would say unto him, and what he would have him write. He would not put pen to paper till he received the word from heaven. "*Antequam ad alios loquar, prius devotè audiam ipse Spiritum Sanctum intus me erudiantem.*"<sup>1</sup> "In the words, 'I will incline mine ear to a similitude,' it is plainly implied that the wisdom which the psalmist would communicate is no self-sprung possession, but one that has been acquired by him . . . he only brought forth what he had learned in the school of God" (Hengstenberg, *in loc.*). The theme of the psalm is suggested by the fact, so often observed, that much of the world's wealth is in the hands of the ungodly. Concerning it, "in Ps. xxxvii. David, in Ps. xlix. the sons of Korah, and in Ps. lxxiii. Asaph, teach the same truth" (Fausset, p. 258). In dealing therewith we shall portion out the homiletic expositions in three distinct outlines. In this we deal with the darker side of the theme.

I. ONE OF LIFE'S MOST PERPLEXING FACTS IS THAT SO MUCH WEALTH SHOULD BE IN BAD HANDS. No observant man can fail to see many illustrations of this.<sup>2</sup> The greatness assumed by the rich often overshadows humbler souls. It sets them wondering why God should let so many of his people struggle with poverty while many of the ungodly are rolling in wealth. And, to the eye of sense, it darkens the world's

<sup>1</sup> 'Poli Synopsis,' *in loc.* The whole paragraph is worth attention.

<sup>2</sup> See *Expositor*, vol. x. p. 466; and *Homilist*, vol. xii. (Editor's series), p. 74.

outlook when, while "money answereth all things," the great bulk of it should be possessed by the godless, the selfish, the oppressors, and the vile. The fact creates fear (ver. 5) in the evil day, since those who have the money-power, and are in a sense the lords of the world, use their power unrighteously. So much so that our Lord employs the striking epithet, "the mammon of unrighteousness" (Luke xvi.). Only one hint, indeed, is given, in the word "iniquity" (ver. 5), that these rich men are evil men. "But this seems to be designed, as in our Lord's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, to show that the selfish, proud, boastful use of riches, the mere luxuriousness of wealth, apart from violence or unscrupulousness of conduct, is evil, and finds its end in the outer darkness."<sup>1</sup> But let us note—

II. THERE ARE FIXED CONDITIONS ON WHICH THIS WEALTH IS POSSESSED. These are here specified as fourfold. 1. Wealth cannot screen from death (vers. 7, 8, 12). There may be (Lev. xxv. 47—55), according to the Law, redemption from poverty; but no brother has any ransom price wherewith to prevent death or to deliver from it. Then, it must be given up altogether. 2. After death the wealth cannot be controlled; it is left to others (ver. 10). 3. The departed one must see corruption (ver. 10). 4. He can carry nothing away (ver. 17; 1 Tim. vi. 7). The "rich" one is "bankrupt" at the moment of death.

III. YET ITS POSSESSORS CHERISH MANIFOLD DELUSIONS. 1. They *trust* in riches (ver. 6; Mark x. 24). 2. They *boast* of their wealth (ver. 6). Yet wealth can never ward off care or sickness. 3. They shut their eyes to their precarious holding of their wealth (ver. 11). 4. They even cherish "inward thoughts" of perpetuity (ver. 11). 5. They make special efforts to perpetuate their honour (vers. 11, 12). 6. They congratulate themselves on their greatness (ver. 18; Luke xii. 19). And all the while they are "fools" in wisdom's eye (ver. 13).

IV. FOR SUCH THERE IS BUT A DISMAL OUTLOOK. 1. Like the brutes, they will yet be reduced to silence (ver. 12).<sup>2</sup> Their proud boasts will soon be stilled. 2. They will descend to Sheol; *i.e.* to the realm of the departed. Neither the word "Sheol" nor the word "Hades" contains *per se* any moral significance, nor does either word convey *per se* the notion of joy or sorrow. But the connection may give such significance to the words. Such is the case here and in Luke xvi. 23; in both the thought of evil and of sorrow is conveyed. 3. Death will shepherd them. They will be under him, for him to lead and feed them. What a shepherd—death! 4. Their flesh will consume away; their glory will be gone (vers. 14, 17, 19, 20). No light ahead! 5. In the great awakening, "in the morning"—the morning of the resurrection—the upright, whom they despised, shall have dominion over them (LXX., *κατακυριεύουσιν*). The lordship was theirs during the night, because of their riches; in the morning that lordship will be transferred to the upright, because of their righteousness (Rev. ii. 26, 27).<sup>3</sup> Hence, note: 1. There is no reason to fear in the day of evil; for evil itself is in the restraint of infinite Power. 2. Where the world sees cleverness and riches, be it ours to see folly and poverty, if godliness be not also there! "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."—C.

Vers. 1—20.—*A contrast: unseen wealth.* To those whose character and outlook are depicted in the bulk of this psalm its writer did not belong. He looks on them; he writes of them; but he is not one with them. The emphatic and striking word "but" (ver. 15) indicates what the context shows, that there is a great gulf between him and them. While the wicked ones who are rolling in wealth despise him because of his distance from them on the ground of earthly poverty, he, on the other hand, looks down with pity upon them because of their distance from him, on the ground of his having "a life hidden with Christ in God," and possessions in heaven, where no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth. And the expositor may well devote his attention to the five lines of contrast indicated in this psalm.

I. THERE IS A CONTRAST IN CHARACTER. (Ver. 14.) "The upright." This is the

<sup>1</sup> So Perowne, in his introduction to the psalm. Why, however, is Luke xvi. 19—31 regarded as a *parable*?

<sup>2</sup> נָפַק. See Lexicon, *sub verb.* נָפַק.

<sup>3</sup> On the dominion of the righteous, see the present writer's article on the verse of the Apocalypse referred to above.

word often used to express the character of the people of God, in distinction from the ungodly (Pss. xxxiii. 1; xxxii. 11; cxii. 4). The word does not mean "perfection," but true sincerity of spirit, combined with the desire to be right in the sight of God. Three things are included therein: (1) repentance; (2) forgiveness; (3) sanctification. Where sin is duly acknowledged, forsaken, forgiven, removed, there, in the sight of God, is an upright man. How great the contrast between such and the "fools," however rich the latter may be!

II. THERE IS A CONTRAST IN POSSESSIONS. Such a one can say, "My God!" And he can think and write and speak of God as One who is his Life, his Hope, his Joy, his Friend, his All (ver. 15).

III. THERE IS A CONTRAST IN THE IMMEDIATE OUTLOOK. Instead of being driven at death into the shades of Sheol, he will be received by God (ver. 15). "He shall receive me." The same word is used of Enoch, "He was not, for God took him;" and by Asaph, in Ps. lxxiii. 24.

IV. THERE IS A CONTRAST IN THE AFTER-GUARDIANSHIP. Instead of death being their shepherd by feeding on them, Jehovah is their Shepherd, and leads them beside living fountains of water.

V. THERE IS A CONTRAST IN THE FAR LOOK. (Ver. 15.) God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; i.e. he will restore me at the resurrection morning. This nature will be completely redeemed—body, soul, and spirit, to be for ever with the Lord.—C.

Ver. 14.—*A vast change: "in the morning."* There have been several different views entertained of the state after death. The realm of departed souls was called by the Hebrews Sheol, or the all-demanding world; by the Greeks Hades, or the unknown world. Practically, either word may be used, since the two simply refer to the same realm looked at under different aspects. To the pagan, Sheol (or Hades) was a dim and grim underworld, with no light beyond. To the Hebrews, Sheol was a dim underworld, with the light at the end—"in the awakening." To the Christian, Hades is a realm of perfect rest in Christ, where the righteous are awaiting the resurrection morn.<sup>1</sup> And we may now set forth the believer's hopes as to that day in far brighter and more vivid tones than were possible to the psalmists and seers of old.

I. THERE WILL BE A RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. Whether or no the psalmist described this, we cannot tell; but we do, for Jesus has brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He is the Saviour of the body; and "whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die." It will be indeed a glorious "morning" when death shall be swallowed up in victory.

II. JEHOVAH-JESUS WILL THEN BE THE SHEPHERD OF HIS FLOCK. As he was their Shepherd when here, and had guard of them between death and the resurrection, so he will be their Shepherd still, to lead and feed them with his own hand. "The upright" will have no such doleful shepherd as death; they will know nothing of dying. In the loving care of Jesus they will know only life and joy.

III. THEN THOSE WHO HAVE FOLLOWED THE LORD JESUS WILL HAVE THE SUPREMACY. "Many that are last shall be first, and the first last," even within the kingdom. But how much more will this reversal be seen in the case of those who are not in the kingdom at all! Many who were among the great, the high, the noble, of earth will not then be owned by the King; while many a poor but humble Christian, whom the world knew not because it knew him not, will hear a voice saying, "Friend, come up higher." Then many of earth's despised ones shall enter into the presence of the King; they shall sit with him on his throne; and they shall have dominion "in the morning." God will cause "all things" to work together for good to those that love him. Evil may ride high for a time, but it must hide its head at last. And when the wicked are ashamed, the righteous will lift up their heads, for the day of their redemption will have come.—C.

Vers. 1—20.—*"Be not afraid."* I. THE PREACHER. (Vers. 3, 4.) He is marked by thoughtfulness. He lends his ear in many a secret place to learn wisdom. His

<sup>1</sup> See the present writer on Rev. i. 18 ('Pulpit Commentary'), and also his sermon on Matt. xvi. 18, in 'To the Light through the Cross' (Dickinson).

inspiration is from above, and he does not speak of himself, but as moved by Divine impulses. What he has gathered by long meditation and experience he gives forth freely for the good of others. His ambition is to make the dark clear, to discern between good and evil, to strip falsehood of its disguises, and to set forth the truth concerning God and human life with all the clearness and charm in his power. Let such a man stand between God and men, and he has a right to be heard.

II. THE AUDIENCE. (Vers. 1, 2.) The call is to all people, for all are interested. Hearing is demanded, for without hearing all speech is vain. It is through hearing that the mind, the conscience, and the affections are reached, and that faith and all the good things which follow, come. Changes there have been, and changes there will be. The old order gives place to the new. But the subject propounded here is for all time. Rich and poor alike would do well to hear and to consider wisely what the preacher has to say; for it not only has the ring of truth, but it is backed by the experience of the ages.

III. THE DISCOURSE. The subject is propounded (ver. 5). It is implied here that the wicked may become rich, and that they may even use their wealth in ways unjust and oppressive. Might and good fortune are at their command. They pursue their selfish and unholy schemes unchecked. God seems to leave them to do their pleasure. The stronger the hope of the godly that judgment will come, the greater their perplexity at its delay. Here is a dark riddle, which presses heavily on many a heart, and which has often, in evil times, constrained the cry of the psalmist: "Why?" But light will arise to the righteous. We are taught to look at things as in the presence of God, discerning between truth and falsehood, and discovering that, in spite of all the outward shows and splendour of the ungodly, their inward state is wickedness, their prosperity is folly, and their end is death—death without God and without hope. Whereas the godly, though they have their trials, have peace; though they may have little of this world's goods, are rich toward God, and rejoice in the consciousness of a life which will conquer death, and of a hope of glory strong as truth is strong, pure as Christ is pure, and eternal as the eternal God. The arguments by which these truths are enforced are weighty and powerful. 1. *The impotence of wealth in the great emergencies of life.* (Ver. 7.) 2. *The transitoriness of all earthly possessions.* (Vers. 10—12.) 3. *The degradation of human character through covetousness and pride.* (Vers. 13, 14.) 4. *The miserable end of the ungodly rich, as contrasted with the happy end of the righteous.* (Vers. 15—20.)

Hear, then, the conclusion of the whole matter. "*Be not afraid*" (vers. 5, 16). The lessons which this old seeker after truth has set forth are elsewhere in Holy Scripture, and especially in the teaching of our Lord and his apostles, expounded and enforced with a clearness which leaves no excuse for ignorance, and with a charm which should win the conviction of all hearts. As we read the Sermon on the Mount, as we study the parables of the rich fool and of the good Samaritan, and as we grasp the great verities of the Gospels and the Epistles, our faith grows in strength and our courage in fervour, and looking unto Jesus, and to the joy set before us, we are able to say to ourselves, in the most evil times, "*Be not afraid.*"—W. F.

Vers. 1—20.—*The issues of life.* Connected with Ps. xvi., xvii., the writer stands face to face with the great problem of the time—the prosperity of the wicked. The two chief causes which forced the conviction of a hereafter on the later Hebrews were a deep dissatisfaction at the prosperity of the wicked and the misfortunes of the righteous in the world; and the earnest longing of the soul for a more perfect communion with God than was possible in the present life; for they could not but believe that God's promises to the righteous would be made good. The subject of this psalm is that the *issues of life* show the difference between the lot of the righteous and the wicked.

I. THE LOT OF THE PROSPEROUS WICKED, WHO TRUST IN RICHES. 1. *Their riches cannot purchase a ransom from death.* (Vers. 7—9.) Money may bribe men, but not God, nor death. 2. *They cannot carry their riches or their glory with them when they die.* (Vers. 16—18.) Both are only transient possessions, which soon pass away. 3. *There is no deliverance for them from the grave.* (Vers. 11—14.) The grave is their everlasting habitation, where all their beauty consumes away.

II. THE PRIVILEGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. *To be fearless and undaunted in respect to the evil devices of the wicked.* (Vers. 5, 6, 16.) 2. *They shall ultimately obtain dominion over the wicked.* (Ver. 14.) All the best and devoutest minds have never doubted that good shall at length triumph over evil. 3. *Redemption from the grave, from Sheol, into a life with God.* (Ver. 15.) "No more momentous struggle ever swayed the heart of man than that which first led him to suspect himself to be immortal."

III. THESE GREAT ISSUES ARE WORTHY THE STUDY OF ALL. (Vers. 1—4.) High and low, rich and poor.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM L.

THE psalmist announces an appearance of God to his people "out of Zion," and a pronouncement of judgment upon them, which all heaven (ver. 4) and earth (ver. 1) are called upon to witness. The judgment takes the shape of a twofold address; first, to the righteous, who are exhorted to the spiritual worship of God (vers. 14, 15), and warned against putting too much trust in sacrifice (vers. 8—13); secondly, to the wicked, who are sternly reproved for their hypocrisy, their hatred of instruction, their sins in act and speech, their want of natural affection, and their low and unworthy idea of the nature of God (vers. 16—21). In conclusion, a word of final warning is given to the wicked (ver. 22), and a word of final encouragement to the righteous (ver. 23).

The psalm consists of four portions: 1. An introduction (divided off by the pause-mark, "Selah," from the rest of the psalm), announcing the "appearance," and calling on heaven and earth to witness it (vers. 1—6). 2. An address to the godly Israelites (vers. 7—15). 3. An address to the ungodly Israelites (vers. 16—21). 4. A conclusion, divided equally between threat and promise (vers. 22, 23).

The psalm is ascribed to Asaph, the "chief," or superintendent, of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. xvi. 4, 5). So are also Psa. lxxiii.—lxxxiii. Some of these may have been composed by later Asaphite Levites; but the present ode may well be Asaph's own, since it "bears all the marks of the golden age of Hebrew poetry." Asaph's composition of a portion of the Psalter is implied in Hezekiah's command to the Levites, reported in 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

PSALMS.

Ver. 1.—The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken. A combination of three names of God—viz. El, Elohim, and Jehovah—only found here and in Josh. xxii. 22. There it is translated "the Lord God of gods," which is a possible rendering. Separately, the three names seem to mean, "The Mighty One," "The Many in One" (Oheyne) or "The Three in One," and "The Self-Existent One." He who is all these, the psalmist announces, "has spoken," and called (or, *summoned*) the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof; i.e. God has summoned all mankind to hear his judgment of his covenant people.

Ver. 2.—Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty (comp. Ps. xlviii. 2; Lam. ii. 15; 1 Macc. ii. 12). God hath shined; i.e. has shown himself in his dazzling radiance. The psalmist, however, does not mean to announce a material, but a spiritual, fact.

Ver. 3.—Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; rather, and let him not keep silence. Let him call attention to his "coming," that his judgment may be widely known. A fire (rather, *fire*) shall devour before him (comp. Ps. xxi. 9). And it shall be very tempestuous round about him. So in all theophanies (see Exod. xix. 16; 1 Kings xix. 11; Job xxxviii. 1; Psa. xviii. 13; xcvii. 2—5; Acts ii. 2; Rev. iv. 5, etc.).

Ver. 4.—He shall call to the heavens from above; rather, to the heavens above; i.e. to the inhabitants of heaven—the holy angels. And to the earth (comp. ver. 1). That he may judge his people. Heaven and earth are called upon to come together, and furnish a fit audience before which the judgment may proceed.

Ver. 5.—Gather my saints together unto me. By "my saints" the psalmist means here, not godly Israel, as in Ps. xvi. 3, but all Israel—the whole nation, whether true servants of Jehovah, or only professed servants. This is rendered clear by the ensuing clause, Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. Not even was the first covenant dedicated without blood (Heb. ix. 18; comp. Exod. xxiv. 3—8); nor could any Israelite remain within the

covenant without frequent sacrifice (Exod. xii. 2—47, etc.).

Ver. 6.—And the heavens shall declare his righteousness. The angelic host, which comes to witness the judgment of Israel (ver. 4), shall proclaim it a righteous judgment. For God is Judge himself. And he will certainly “do right” (Gen. xviii. 25).

Vers. 7—15.—“The continuance of this dramatic scene,” as Professor Cheyne remarks, “scarcely answers to the commencement. The judgment seems to be adjourned, or to be left to the conscience of the defendants.” The faithful are summoned, and appear, but not to receive unqualified commendation (see Matt. xxv. 31—40). Rather they receive a warning. The strong and prolonged depreciation of sacrifice (vers. 8—13) necessarily implies that in the religion of the time too much stress was laid upon it. We know that, in the heathen world, men sought to buy God’s favour by their sacrifices, some believing that, physically, the gods were nourished by the steam of the victims, others regarding them as laid under obligations which they could not disregard (Plato, ‘Rep.’ ii. § vi.; Rawlinson, ‘Religions of the Ancient World,’ pp. 124, 125). We know, too, that, in the later monarchy, sacrifice to so great an extent superseded true spiritual worship among the Israelites themselves, that it became an offence to God, and was spoken of in terms of reprobation (Isa. i. 11—13; lxvi. 3). Already, it would seem, this tendency was manifesting itself, and a warning from Heaven was needed against it.

Ver. 7.—Hear, O my people, and I will speak. God will not speak to deaf ears. Unless men are ready to attend to him, he keeps silence. O Israel, and I will testify against thee; or, *protest unto thee* (Kay, Cheyne). I am God, even thy God. And therefore am entitled to be heard.

Ver. 8.—I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings. It is for no neglect of the outward ritual of religion—of sacrifice and offering—that I have to reprove thee. To have been continually before me; rather, *they have been continually before me*. I have had enough of them, and to spare. Not only have the daily morning and evening sacrifices been regularly offered, and the national worship thus kept up without a break; but the private offerings of individuals (see vers. 9, 13) have been continuous and ample in number. But they have not been acceptable.

Ver. 9.—I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. The offerings of those who offer amiss will not be accepted. God declines to receive them.

Ver. 10.—For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. So the Revised Version, Dr. Kay, Canon Cook, the Four Friends, and others; but many critics regard such a rendering as impossible. Of these, some translate, “And the cattle upon the hills, where there are thousands” (Hupfeld, Hengstenberg, etc.); while others read אלהים for אלה, and render, “And the cattle upon the mountains of God” (Olshausen, Cheyne).

Ver. 11.—I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine; literally, *are with me*. All creation is God’s, known to him, and owned by him, to be dealt with at his pleasure. How, then, should he need gifts from men?

Ver. 12.—If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; *i.e.* suppose it possible that I could be hungry, I should not have recourse to man; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof—and I should have recourse to it.

Ver. 13.—Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? But is it to be supposed, can any suppose it possible, that 1, the Lord of heaven and earth, the invisible Author of all things, both visible and invisible, can need material sustenance, and can condescend to find any sustenance in bulls’ flesh and goats’ blood? Scarcely did even the grossest of the heathen take this view. A vapour, an odour (*κρίσιν*), was thought to ascend from the victims sacrificed, and this penetrated to the Olympian abodes, and gratified, or, as some would say, “fed” the gods. But such coarse feeding as that suggested in the text was hardly imagined by any, unless it were by utter savages and barbarians.

Ver. 14.—Offer unto God thanksgiving. The one offering acceptable to God is praise and thanksgiving out of a pure heart. This was designed to be the accompaniment of all sacrifice, and was the ground of acceptability in every case where sacrifice was acceptable. And pay thy vows unto the Most High; *i.e.* “and so pay thy vows.” So offer thy worship, and it will be accepted.

Ver. 15.—And call upon me in the day of trouble (comp. Ps. xx. 1). I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. The meaning is, “Then, when thou shalt offer unto me a true worship (ver. 14), if thou wilt call upon me in the day of trouble, I will assuredly deliver thee, and so give thee occasion for glorifying me.”

Vers. 16—21.—While even the more godly among the Israelites have been thus, to a



certain extent, reproved (vers. 8—14), the psalmist now addresses to the ungodly, the open and wilful transgressors, a far sterner rebuke. They claim the privileges of God's covenanted servants (ver. 16), but perform none of the duties (vers. 17—20), thus bringing down upon themselves a terrible menace.

Ver. 16.—But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? The wicked assumed that they were true Israelites. They were familiar with the words of God's statutes, and with the terms of the covenant. They claimed the right of enforcing them against others (Rom. ii. 18—20), while in their own persons they set them at nought (vers. 18—20). God declares that they have no right to assume to be teachers of others until they have taught themselves—they are unfit even to "take his covenant in their mouth."

Ver. 17.—Seeing thou hatest instruction (comp. Prov. i. 25, 29). God, by his Law, teaches men their duties; but many men "hate" to be instructed. And eastest my words behind thee (comp. 1 Kings xiv. 9; Neh. ix. 26). They proceed from "inward alienation" to "open rejection" of the moral law.

Ver. 18.—When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst unto him. God tests his professed, but really disobedient, servants by the second table of the Decalogue, and finds them wanting. If they do not themselves actually rob, they give their consent, they become accessories before the fact, to robbery. They probably participate in the gains. And hast been partaker with adulterers; rather, *and with adulterers is thy portion*; i.e. thou hast thrown in thy lot with them, hast adopted their principles, hast set at nought the seventh no less than the eighth commandment.

Ver. 19.—Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit; rather, *thou hast loosed thy mouth to evil*; i.e. given it liberty to utter all manner of wicked speech; and especially thou hast used mouth and tongue to cozen and deceive.

Ver. 20.—Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother. Professor Cheyne understands by "brother" any fellow-Israelite; but the

parallel in the second hemistich—*Thou slanderest thine own mother's son*—implies that an actual brother is intended. It is one of the special characteristics of the reprobate to be "without natural affection" (Rom. i. 31).

Ver. 21.—These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself. Because God did not interpose openly to punish the sins committed, the transgressor dared to imagine him to be indifferent to sin, "such an one as himself"—no holier, no purer, no more averse to evil. But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. But now the time is come when I shall no longer keep silence; I shall openly "reprove" thee, and marshal in set order before thee all the wicked deeds which thou hast done. God, as Calvin says, "will lay before them in exact order a full catalogue of their misdeeds, which they must read and own, whether they will or not."

Ver. 22.—Now consider this, ye that forget God. Having been "reproved," the wicked are now, in conclusion, exhorted and warned. "Consider this;" i.e. take it to heart, reflect upon it, let it sink deeply into your minds and consciences, and act upon it. Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. A most awful threat. To "tear in pieces" is the act of a wild beast (Ps. vii. 2). Job declares that God "teareth him;" but otherwise the expression is scarcely used of Divine chastisements. Certainly, if God, in his anger, lays hold upon a man to punish him, there is no possible deliverance at the hand of any other man (Ps. xlix. 7, 8). Deliverance, if it comes at all, must come from the Redeemer within the Godhead.

Ver. 23.—Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God. As the wicked have their parting warning, so the godly have their parting encouragement. God is "glorified" (see ver. 15) by those who offer him praise from a sincere heart; and if a man will lay down for himself a straight path and pursue it, God will "show him his salvation," i.e. will bring him to peace and blessedness.

#### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 21.—*Thoughts of God.* "Thou thoughtest . . . as thyself." What a man thinks in his heart of God is the turning-point of life and character. If we think "all things are naked and opened," etc. (Heb. iv. 13), that we really "have to do" with God, this must needs tell on our whole view of life, from its greatest affairs to its least. If we think God takes no note of sin, we shall be careless of sin. If we think of God as severe, implacable, unjust, we may fear him, but cannot love him. If we

think of him as loving and merciful, "faithful and just to forgive," etc. (1 John i. 9), we shall learn to "love him, because he first loved us" (iv. 19); and loving, shall obey. And if we think of him as holy, we shall hate sin, and strive after holiness (Heb. xii. 14). Let us note (1) the *wrong thought* of God here rebuked; (2) the *equally dangerous opposite error*; (3) the *truth*, which in a distorted, imperfect form, is to be found in both.

I. THE ERROR OF BRINGING DOWN OUR THOUGHTS OF GOD TO THE LEVEL OF HUMAN NATURE—measuring God by man. "Thou thoughtest," etc. This is the germ of idolatry. Man's nature makes him a worshipper. His reason demands God. His heart cries out for God. His weakness needs God. But his sinfulness shrinks from a righteous and holy God (see St. Paul's account of the matter, Rom. i. 19—25). But those to whom this warning is spoken are not idolaters, any more than they are atheists. They "declare God's statutes" and "take his covenant in their mouth." Professed members of his Church, even teachers in it. But "in works they deny him" (Titus i. 16). Looking at this psalm as predictive, its first fulfilment was when our Saviour denounced the hypocrites of this day; as in Matt. xxiv. Its final fulfilment will be that of which he speaks in Matt. vii. 21—23. (The whole second chapter of Romans is a commentary on this psalm.) How is such self-deceiving hypocrisy possible? Through false thoughts of God. Men persuade themselves that he does not mean what he says; will not be hard on them; is too indulgent really to punish sin. Not only a fatal error, but one that adds to other sins that of insulting the Most High! Terrible to think that men may set up an idol in their own thoughts—a false view of God's character and dealings, as unlike God as Baal or Juggernaut!

II. THE OPPOSITE ERROR IS THAT OF SUPPOSING THAT GOD IN NO RESPECT RESEMBLES MAN; OR MAN, GOD. That there is nothing in our nature—conscience, reason, affections—from which we may infer some correspondence in "the Father of spirits." God is thus removed out of all reach of our knowledge, sympathy, love; and even trust and obedience. This is the error to which men are most prone in our own day, especially men of cultured intellect and science. They see themselves surrounded by an order so stupendous, laws so unchangeable, worlds and systems so remote, so ancient, so infinite to our feeble thought, that the Creator seems infinitely removed—lost in the greatness of his own works. The world by wisdom knows not God. If such men worship, it is not the God revealed in the Bible and in Christ, but an idol—not of sense or imagination, but intellect—"the Infinite," "the Absolute," "the Stream of tendency making for righteousness," "the Unknowable."

III. IN BOTH THESE ERRORS THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TRUTH. But only half the truth. Half-truths are often the most deadly errors, when mistaken for whole truths. But truth is not found by flying from one error to the opposite extreme. The truth contained, but concealed and distorted, in idolatry, is that man's nature has something akin to God, so that man can converse with God. The truth contained, but perverted, in the philosophy which declares God to be "unknowable," is that our knowledge of him, though real and true, must needs be very limited. Finite minds cannot comprehend the Infinite.

The narrow limits of our knowledge of God, and its necessary imperfection, are amply taught in the Bible (see Exod. iii. 13, 14; Isa. xl. 25; lv. 8, 9). But the *main efforts* and purpose of the Bible, from first to last, is not to weigh us down with God's incomprehensible greatness, but to lift us up and bring us near to him. Its opening page shows us, not *God in the likeness of man*, but man created in *the image of God*. Then the Scripture goes on to reveal God (1) by *providence*, dealing with individuals as well as nations and the race; (2) by *law*, binding us to him in duty and obedience; (3) by *promise*, binding himself to us in a personal moral relation, which we personally enter into by faith; by (4) *miracle*, making nature, where only dead law seems to reign, reveal his living presence, power, and love; (5) by *inspiration*, communicating in human thought and speech all that we most need to know of him. Lastly, all these meet and are perfected in *Christ* (Heb. i. 1—3; John i. 18; xiv. 9).

Ver. 22.—*Forgetfulness of God*. "Now consider," etc. The prevailing character of the Book of Psalms is that Divine truth is clothed in the language of human experience. But in this psalm God alone speaks. The personality of the psalmist vanishes

Man's voice is hushed. We are called into the very presence of God, like Israel at the foot of Sinai. It is God's voice that summons us to judgment, and sets our sins in order before our eyes. Yet it is the voice of merciful warning. "Consider!" (Isa. i. 18). The sin here rebuked is *forgetfulness of God*.

I. IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO FORGET GOD. God might have made it impossible. He might have surrounded us with symbols of his presence which the dullest could not mistake. Voices from the sky might thunder his Name in our ears. An inward irresistible consciousness of his being and presence might have been an inseparable part of our nature. But no! A mysterious veil hangs between our soul and our Creator. We have no *direct* knowledge of God. He has left us at liberty, if we please, to forget him. We can bury ourselves in things around us, and forget him in whom we "live and move and have our being."

II. IT seems wonderful that it is *possible*, and not difficult; but more wonderful still that FORGETFULNESS OF GOD IS COMMON. Who are they who are here charged with forgetting God? Not idolaters. Not atheists. Not the openly profane and irreligious. Those (ver. 16) who "declare God's statutes, and take his covenant in their mouth." Of such St. Paul speaks (Rom. ii. 17—23), and our Saviour (Matt. vii. 21—23). They *forget God*. It is the description (alas!) of the daily life of thousands of habitual attendants on public worship. Hearers, but not doers; forgetful hearers (Jas. i. 22—25).

III. FORGETFULNESS OF GOD IS A HUGE INGRATITUDE; A DEADLY SIN. How can you account for it? Men may dislike the Scripture doctrine of the sinfulness of human nature. They may deny it. But this fact stares us in the face—prevailing forgetfulness of God. How explain it, except as the Scriptures explain it?—men *do not like* to retain God in their knowledge (Rom. i. 28; viii. 7).

IV. FORGETFULNESS OF GOD MUST NEEDS BE VERY DANGEROUS; IF PERSISTED IN, FATAL. Your forgetfulness does not affect the reality of things. It banishes God from your thought and affection; not from his universe. He cannot forget. He must deal with you, and deal justly. He must take account of your forgetting him. "Consider!" Consider the folly, ingratitude, sin, danger, of forgetting God. His mercies are new every morning. "He will ever be mindful of his covenant;" "He is faithful and just to forgive sins;" and promises (Isa. xliii. 25) to "remember them no more." Can there be forgetfulness in the infinite mind? Can God cease to be omniscient? Not literally; but by this intensely strong figure the Bible sets forth the generous and loving completeness of Divine forgiveness. It is an *act of oblivion*. "Consider!" We have forgotten God, but he has not forgotten us. He "remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. cxxxvi. 23). He *beseeches you to be reconciled!*

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—23.—*The Judge, the judged, and the eternal judgment.* A psalm-writer whom we have not met before, appears to have penned this psalm—Asaph. But whether it was by him or for his choir is somewhat uncertain. "Asaph was the leader and superintendent of the Levitic choirs appointed by David (1 Chron. xvi. 4, 5; cf. 2 Chron. xxix. 30). He and his sons presided over four out of the twenty-four groups, consisting each of twelve Levites, who conducted, in turn, the musical services of the temple."<sup>1</sup> "It is remarkable," says Hengstenberg, "that the voice against the false estimate of the external worship of God proceeded from the quarter which was expressly charged with its *administration*. Asaph, according to 1 Chron. vi. 24, was of the tribe of Levi."<sup>2</sup> But let the human penman have been whosoever he may, there is in this psalm so much of the sublime grandeur of a stern and inflexible righteousness, that we have therein, manifestly, the writing of one who was borne along by the Holy Ghost to utter words for God that should be suited for all Churches and all the ages throughout all time; so that it behoves us to listen to them as to

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Ps. l. in 'Speaker's Commentary.'

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Binnie has an exceedingly interesting passage on "The Psalms of Asaph the Seer," pp. 73—76.

the words of the living God, declaring the principles of eternal judgment. "In a magnificent vision the prophet to whom this psalm is due beholds the Almighty denouncing a solemn judgment against the degradation of his Name, and setting forth the requirements of a spiritual religion."<sup>1</sup> In opening up this psalm, therefore, the expositor may well yearn to unfold it, "not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God." In that spirit, and with that aim, we hope to deal with it now. There are some ten questions to be asked and answered concerning this disclosure of judgment which the psalm so sublimely sets before us.

I. TO WHOM DOES THE OFFICE OF JUDGE BELONG? In the sixth verse we read, "God is Judge himself." He allows none but himself to sit in judgment on others; for none else has the authority or the ability to do it. But he, whose great Trinity of names is given here, keeps all in infinite hands. "God" the Supreme Ruler; *Elohim*, the God of gods; *Jehovah*, the covenant God of Israel;—he it is who is thus enthroned and speaks with his voice, on the eternal principles which are the basis of his throne.

II. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THAT OFFICE? As here indicated, it includes the *expression* of his mind and will, as to the worship he requires, the conduct he approves or disapproves, the decisions he forms, the sentences he pronounces, the destinies he assigns. For long God may have seemed to keep silence hereon (ver. 21), but he will not be silent always (ver. 3).

III. WHEN DOES THE JUDGMENT TAKE PLACE? It can scarcely be questioned that the remarkable words in ver. 3 point to a specific time when God shall *come* to judgment, and when attendant on the judgment there will be great signs and wonders in the heaven above and the earth beneath (see vers. 1, 3, 4). But three or four distinctive forms of God's judgment are indicated in Scripture. 1. The judgment at the last day. This is brought before us in Matt. xxv. 31—46. 2. The judgment expressed in providential dispensations on the Jewish Church (Jer. vii. 1—20; Ezek. ix. 4—6; 1 Pet. iv. 17). 3. The judgments that are brought upon Christian Churches that are unfaithful. These are plainly enough shown us in the epistles to the seven Churches.<sup>2</sup> 4. The judgment that is ever going on in every visible Church—a judgment by One whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who walks in the midst of the golden lamps. This is God's "eternal judgment" (Heb. vi. 1), the principles of which never, never vary. What they will be seen to be at the last day they are now, seen or unseen.

IV. WHO ARE THE JUDGED? (Ver. 5.) The heavens and the earth are called to be witnesses of God's judgment "of the covenant people" (Cheyne). "This psalm," says Dickson, "is a citing of the visible Church before God . . . to compare before the tribunal of God, now in time while mercy may be had, timously to consider the Lord's controversy against the sinners in his Church, that they may repent and be saved." "The psalm," says Perowne, "deals with 'the sinners and the hypocrites in Zion,' but it reaches to all men, in all places, to the end of time." It contains the message of Divine indignation to those *in* Israel who were not *of* Israel; it specifies: 1. The *superstitious*—those who brought offerings of slain beasts in sacrifice, thinking that God accepted *them as such*, or who even, perhaps, stooped to the pagan notion that such sacrifices were "food for the gods." Hence, though there is no rebuke over any offerings withheld (ver. 8), yet there is severe indignation against the low conceptions of God and his worship with which these offerings were brought (vers. 9—13). 2. There were the scribes (see Matthew Poole), who expounded the Law, but kept it not (ver. 16). 3. There were those whose service was but a form—who vowed to God, but did not pay (ver. 14). 4. There were the openly wicked, who sought by profession of religion to cloak their wickedness (vers. 17—20). Think of such a heterogeneous mass being collected together in one visible Church! Is it any wonder that "judgment must *begin* at the house of God"?

V. WHAT IS THE BASIS OF JUDGMENT? (Ver. 2.) "Out of Zion God hath shined." As from Mount Sinai he declared his will in the legislation of Moses, so from Zion he hath declared his will in the proclamations of prophet, apostle, saint, and seer; and according to those principles of truth and righteousness thus proclaimed is God's

<sup>1</sup> 'The Psalms, chronologically arranged,' by Four Friends, p. 168. See also the twenty-fifth lecture in Mr. Fausset's 'Studies in the Psalms.'

<sup>2</sup> See the present writer's articles thereon, in 'Pulpit Commentary.'

judgment ever being exercised; according to them will it finally proceed. And according to the measure of light granted to men, will be the standard by which they will be tried. Fuller light on this theme comes to view in the New Testament. Peter's words (Acts x. 35; 1 Pet. iii. 18—iv. 6), Paul's words (Rom. ii. 16; xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10), throw a flood of light hereon, showing us that ere the *final* judgment comes every soul will come to know its relation to the Lord Jesus, and that according to its response will be its destiny.<sup>1</sup>

**VI. WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH JUDGMENT WILL PROCEED?** Five of these are indicated in the psalm. 1. That merely formal offerings are offensive to God (vers. 8—13). 2. That no measure of religiousness will be accepted if iniquity has prevailed in the heart and life (ver. 16). 3. That the truly acceptable worship is a life of consecration, fidelity, prayer, and praise (vers. 14, 15). 4. That whosoever has ordered his life after the revealed will of God, will see God's salvation (ver. 23). 5. That wherever the life has been one of forgetfulness and neglect of God, the guilty one will be confounded (ver. 22).

**VII. WHAT ARE THE COMPLAINTS MADE BY THE GREAT JUDGE?** One is negative, viz. the absence of the worship of the heart; another is positive—hypocrisy and guilt screened under a profession of religion, and the thought being cherished all the while that they would never be detected (ver. 21).

**VIII. WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SOVEREIGN JUDGE?** A life of (1) praise (ver. 23); (2) thanksgiving (ver. 14); (3) loyalty (ver. 14); (4) prayer (ver. 15); (5) glorifying God (ver. 15); (6) a good and upright conversation (ver. 23). Who does not see how infinitely such a life rises above that of merely formal lip-service?

**IX. WHAT WILL BE THE ISSUE OF THE JUDGMENT?** Under varied forms of expression, the results are declared to be twofold, according to the main drifts of character and life. 1. For those in the wrong, rejection, sin set in order, brought home, exposed, condemned (vers. 21, 22). 2. For those who are in the right—the salvation of God (Acts x. 35; xv. 8, 9, 11). Thus under every head, though in archaic form, and with light less full, the very same truths are declared by the psalmist that were afterwards brought out more fully by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

**X. TO WHOM IS THE CALL ADDRESSED TO HEAR ALL THIS, AND WHY?** (Vers. 1, 4.) The whole earth is called on to witness and to watch the severely discriminating judgments of God on his visible Church; and every one is called upon to hearken, because it is *God* who speaketh. The Apostle Peter raises a momentous question in 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. Whether we are ready to face the last judgment depends on how we stand in relation to that judgment which is going on every hour. Note: After studying such a psalm as this, how vain does the question put by Roman Catholics appear, "Where can I find God's true Church?" For this whole psalm is addressed to God's true Church. Yet whoever, even "in Zion," is at ease, or formal, or corrupt, will find that not even membership in any visible Church will save him. Only those will be saved whose hearts are purified by faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.—C.

**Vers. 1—23.—God the righteous Judge.** I. THAT GOD WILL JUDGE ALL MEN. Even now there is judgment. Every act of our lives has its moral character, and carries its consequences of good or evil. But this judgment is but partial and incomplete. Reason, conscience, and Holy Scripture proclaim a judgment to come which will be perfect and final. The supreme Judge of all men is God. He and he alone has the right and the power. He has perfect knowledge, and cannot err; he has absolute righteousness, and cannot do injustice; he has almighty power, and cannot be prevented from carrying his judgments into effect. In the psalm the vision seems gradually to unfold itself till the great God stands before us in awful majesty and glory, "the Judge of the quick and the dead."

II. THAT GOD'S JUDGMENT WILL SETTLE FOR EVER THE DESTINIES OF MEN. God comes to us now, but it is in mercy. He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but would rather that all should turn from their evil ways and live. But there is a great crisis near, when he will come as a Judge, and when all men shall be brought consciously before him for judgment. The judgment will be *universal*: not only Israel, but all the earth; but it will begin at the house of God. *Unavoidable*: there will

<sup>1</sup> See the present writer's book on 'Theories of Future Punishment,' 2nd edit. (Snow).

be no possibility of eluding the officers of justice, or of evading the testimony of the witnesses. *Conclusive*: it is *the last* judgment, from which there can be no appeal, whose sentences are irreversible and eternal.

III. THAT GOD WILL SETTLE THE DESTINIES OF MEN ON THE GROUNDS OF ETERNAL JUSTICE. There is a hint as to the principles on which the judgment will be based in ver. 7. Everything may be said to turn on the kind of religion which we have. This is shown negatively (vers. 8—13), then positively (vers. 14—23). True religion is not outward, but inward; not formal, but spiritual; not conventional, but personal; not in privileges, not in professions, not in ceremonial observances, but in the sincere obedience of the heart and life. It implies that God's love is supreme in the heart, and God's law is supreme in the life. Such a religion can only be obtained for sinners through Jesus Christ the Saviour. Where it really exists there is not only the form, but the power of godliness—in grateful thanksgiving and joyous obedience and adoring prayer (ver. 23).—W. F.

Vers. 7—21.—*True religion and its counterfeits*. The great evil to which Israel was exposed was the separation of religion from morality. This comes out lamentably in their history, and forms the burden of much of the teaching of their prophets. So in this psalm, which contains a powerful demonstration of the worthlessness of religion without godliness. The psalm may help us to consider *true religion and its counterfeits*.

I. SUPERSTITION. (Ver. 7.) Nothing in religion can be real and true but what is based on faith in the living God. What springs from fear without knowledge degenerates into the basest idolatries.

II. FORMALISM. (Vers. 8—14.) The heading of this psalm in our Bibles is very true and suggestive. "The pleasure of God is not in ceremonies, but in sincerity of obedience." To this all the prophets bear witness. Even ceremonies appointed by God himself become not only worthless, but odious, when they are observed without faith and love (Isa. i. 11—17).

III. HYPOCRITICAL PROFESSION. (Vers. 16—21.) There is much of this always in the world—false profession, insincere obedience, unloving service. The evil effect on individuals, families, and society is terrible. With what righteous indignation are such hypocrites arraigned! and with what stern, resistless argument is the inconsistency and enormity of their conduct denounced!—W. F.

Ver. 15.—"*The day of trouble*." I. HERE IS A DAY THAT WILL COME TO ALL. You may not have hitherto known "trouble;" if so, be thankful, but prepared. The immunity of the past is no protection. Sooner or later it will be said to you, as Eliphaz said to Job, "Now it is come upon thee" (Job iv. 5). And this is well. To be without trouble would be to lack one of the chief disciplines of life, and to lay us under the suspicion of being "bastards, not sons."

II. HERE IS A DUTY URGED UPON ALL. "Call upon me." 1. This duty is agreeable to our nature. In trouble we crave sympathy and help. As the child instinctively cries to its mother, so should we call upon God. 2. This duty is prompted by our circumstances. "Trouble" not only causes pain, but fear. Under the pressure of need we come to the throne of grace for mercy and grace. 3. This duty is enforced by the example of the good. They speak of what they have known. With grateful hearts they tell of what the Lord has done for them (Ps. lxxvii. 1; 2 Cor. i. 3, 4). 4. This duty is urged by God our heavenly Father. He anticipates our needs; he lovingly invites our confidence; he assures us of his readiness to give us help and comfort (Isa. xliii. 1, 2).

III. HERE IS A PROMISE ENCOURAGING TO ALL. The promise and the duty are connected, and both are to be taken together with what goes before (ver. 14). It is when we have been living near to God, and have been daily performing our vows to him with praise and thanksgiving, that we are best prepared for the duty of prayer and the fulfilment of the promises. This promise implies what God will do for us, and what return we should then make to God. Calling upon God in trouble has an elevating effect; it brings us into nearer fellowship with God in heart and will and life. We will "glorify" God for being with us *in* trouble, as delivering us *from* trouble, as making trouble *work for our good*.—W. F.

Vers. 1—15.—*Fulfil to covenant.* God comes to Zion, as he once came to Sinai, amidst fire and tempest, calling upon the heavens and the earth to be his witnesses, while he summons his people to judgment, in which he proclaims how they had been false to the covenant that was between them.

I. THE ACCUSATION. (Vers. 7—13.) 1. *They had forgotten the spiritual relations between them.* (Vers. 5—7.) They were “his saints,” “his people;” “he was God, even their God.” And he had to testify against them. They had not acted up to the spirit of that relation. 2. *They brought him unspiritual sacrifices.* Their heart did not go with their offerings. He did not complain of the offering in itself, but of the spirit in which it was brought. 3. *What they brought was no gift of their own.* (Vers. 10—12.) Their offerings were his possessions, which he had in abundance. 4. *They had forgotten his spiritual nature and requirement.* (Ver. 13.) The flesh and blood of animals could not please or satisfy a spiritual nature.

II. THE REQUIREMENT. (Vers. 14, 15.) 1. *Thanksgiving.* The gratitude and praise of the heart—a spiritual offering. 2. *The paying of vows.* The vows that are upon us in consequence of our covenant with God—or *fidelity, faithfulness.* 3. *Prayer.* “Call upon me in the day of trouble;” not only then, but specially then.

III. THE REWARD OF SPIRITUAL SERVICE. (Ver. 15.) “I will deliver thee in the day of trouble, and thou shalt praise me.”—S.

Vers. 16—23.—*Hypocrisy.* God speaks to the whole nation in the previous part of the psalm; here to hypocrites.

I. THEY MADE PROFESSION OF RELIGION, WHICH THEIR LIVES CONTRADICTED. (Vers. 16—20.) 1. *They treated the Divine Law with open contempt.* (Ver. 17.) Because they “hated” the control that it imposes. 2. *They were guilty of the grossest violations of that Law.* (Vers. 18—20.) Theft, adultery, and false witness, not only against their neighbour, but against their own *brothers*, showing that they had lost even natural affection. Observe the gradual, progressive power which sin has to corrupt the whole man.

II. EVIL MEN MISINTERPRET THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD. (Ver. 21.) “Because sentence against an evil man is not speedily executed,” etc. (Rom. ii. 1—4).

III. GOD WILL ASSUREDLY ENTER INTO JUDGMENT WITH MEN. (Vers. 21, 22.) Men are solemnly called upon to consider and remember this truth, that they may repent, and so escape destruction.

IV. THE ONLY TRUE WAY OF SALVATION IS DECLARED. (Ver. 23.) 1. *The love of a grateful heart.* This glorifies God. 2. *And the love of an obedient life.* This only is salvation—obedience out of love. “He that hath my Word and keepeth it, he it is that loveth me,” etc.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM LI.

THIS is the first of a series of fifteen psalms assigned by their titles to David, and mostly attached to special circumstances in his life, which are said to have furnished the occasions for their composition. The school of writers which brushes aside the “titles” as unauthorized and unhistorical, and so regards itself as wholly free to assign to any psalm any date and any author that it prefers, places this among post-Captivity compositions, especially on account of vers. 18, 19 (so Professor Cheyne, Dr. Robertson Smith, the Four Friends, and others). Those, on the contrary, who consider the

“titles” to be entitled to regard and respect, even if not absolutely authoritative, find either nothing in the psalm unsuitable to David’s time, or else nothing but what may well have been a subsequent addition for liturgical purposes. This is the view taken by many with respect to the last two verses. Others, however, note that the walls of Jerusalem were not built, but only in the course of being built, in David’s time, and regard the whole psalm as eminently suited to the period whereto the title ascribes it (so Hangstenberg, Canon Cook, Dr. Kay, Professor Alexander, and others).

The psalm consists of an opening strophe, extending to four verses, which is an earnest

prayer for mercy and forgiveness (vers. 1—4); a second strophe, of eight verses, which is an entreaty for restoration and renewal (vers. 5—12); a third strophe, of five verses, setting forth the return which the psalmist will make, if he is forgiven and restored (vers. 13—17); and a conclusion, in two verses, praying for God's blessing on the people, and promising an ample return on their part (vers. 18, 19).

Ver. 1.—Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness. It is observable that the whole psalm is addressed to God (*Elohim*), and not to Jehovah (the "Lord" in ver. 15 is *Adonai*), as though the psalmist felt himself unworthy to utter the covenant-name, and simply prostrated himself as a guilty man before his offended Maker. It is not correct to say that "loving-kindness implies a covenant" (Cheyne), since God is "good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. cxlv. 9). According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. David's first prayer is for pity; his second, to have his offences "blotted out," or "wiped out"—entirely removed from God's book (comp. Exod. xxxii. 32; Isa. xliii. 25; xlv. 22). He says "my transgressions," in the plural, because "his great sin did not stand alone—adultery was followed by treachery and murder" (Canon Cook).

Ver. 2.—Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity. Wash me, as a fuller washes a fouled garment (*πλύνων*, LXX., not *ύψιον*), not as a man washes his skin. And cleanse me from my sin. "Transgressions," "iniquity," "sin," cover every form of moral evil, and, united together, imply the deepest guilt (comp. vers. 3, 5, 9, 14).

Ver. 3.—For I acknowledge my transgressions (comp. Ps. xxxii. 5, "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin"). The first step in repentance is contrition; the second, confession; the third, amendment of life. And my sin is ever before me. I bear it in mind; I do not hide it from myself. I keep it continually before my mental vision. This, too, is characteristic of true penitence. Mock penitents confess their sins, and straightway forget them. Real genuine ones find it impossible to forget.

Ver. 4.—Against thee, these only, have I sinned. Though no sins could be more directly against man than adultery and murder, yet David feels that that aspect of them shrinks away into insignificance, and is as if it were not, when they are viewed in their true and real character, as offences against the majesty of God. Every sin is

mainly against God; and the better sort of men always feel this. "How can I do this great wickedness," says Joseph, when tempted by Potiphar's wife, "*and sin against God?*" And so David to Nathan, when he was first rebuked by him, "I have sinned *against the Lord*" (2 Sam. xii. 13). And done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Clear in the eyes of the world, that is; free from all charge of harshness or injustice, when thou judgest me, and condemnest me for my sins, as thou must do.

Vers. 5—12.—The prayer now makes a stride in advance. It has been hitherto for the first step in justification—the wiping out of past transgressions. It is now for restoration, for a renewal of spiritual life, for a return to God's favour, and to the spiritual joy involved in it. First, however, an additional confession is made (vers. 5, 6). Not only have I committed acts of sin (vers. 1—4), but sin is thoroughly ingrained into my nature. I was conceived in it; I was brought forth in it; only the strongest remedies can cleanse me from it (ver. 7). But cleansing alone is not enough. I need renewal (ver. 10); I need thy Holy Spirit (ver. 11); I crave, above all, the sense of a restoration to thy favour—a return to the old feelings of "joy and gladness" (ver. 8), even "the joy of thy salvation" (ver. 12).

Ver. 5.—Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; rather, *in iniquity was I brought forth*. And in sin did my mother conceive me. It is doubtless true, as Professor Cheyne says, that "the Old Testament contains no *theory* of the origin of sin"—no formulated doctrine on the subject. But the fact of congenital depravity is stated, not only here, but also in Job xiv. 4; Ps. lvi. 3; it is also implied in Isa. xliii. 27 and Hos. vi. 7.

Ver. 6.—Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts (comp. Job xxxviii. 36). God requires not merely such purity as might be attained by the use of legal and ritual methods; but true inward purity of thought and heart, which is a very different matter. And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom; rather, *do thou make me*. An optative, according to Professor Cheyne. The meaning is, "As nothing will content thee but this perfect, inward purity, do thou give me into my heart its fundamental principle—wisdom, or the fear of God."

Ver. 7.—Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. "Hyssop" alone could by



the Levitical Law cleanse from contact with a corpse (Numb. xix. 18) or from the defilement of leprosy (Lev. xiv. 4). David recognizes that his impurity is of the extremest kind, and needs the remedy which has the greatest purifying power. Legally, this was the hyssop, with its "blood of sprinkling" (Lev. xiv. 6, 7); spiritually, it was the blood of Christ, which was thus symbolized. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Again the word is used which corresponds to the Greek *πλύνον*. "Wash me as garments are washed by the fuller" (see the comment on ver. 2).

Ver. 8.—Make me to hear joy and gladness (comp. below, ver. 12). On forgiveness follows naturally the sense of it, and this sense is in itself a deep satisfaction. But the psalmist seems to ask for something more. He wants not mere negative peace and rest, but the active thrilling joy which those experience who feel themselves restored to God's favour, and bask in the light of his countenance. That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. That every ache and pain may cease, and be replaced by gladness and rejoicing.

Ver. 9.—Hide thy face from my sins. Turn thyself away from them—do not so much as see them. The apostle speaks of times of ignorance, which God "winked at" (Acts xvii. 30). And blot out all mine iniquities (comp. ver. 1).

Ver. 10.—Create in me a clean heart, O God; i.e. do more than purify me—do more than cleanse me (ver. 7); by an act of creative power (*ברא*) make in me a new clean heart. Compare the Christian doctrine of the "new birth" and "new life." And renew a right spirit within me. "Heart" and "spirit" are used interchangeably for the inward essence of man; but, as Professor Cheyne observes, "Heart emphasizes the individual side of a man's life; spirit, its Divine, or at least preternatural side." David, in asking both for a new heart and a new spirit, requests the renovation of his entire mental and moral nature, which he recognizes as corrupt and depraved.

Ver. 11.—Cast me not away from thy presence. To be "cast away from God's presence" is to be altogether cast out of his covenant, made an alien from him, deprived of his favour and the light of his countenance (see Gen. iv. 14; 2 Kings xiii. 23). The psalmist deprecates so terrible a punishment, although he feels that he has deserved it. And take not thy Holy Spirit from me. God's Holy Spirit had been poured upon David when he was first anointed by Samuel to the kingly office (1 Sam. xvi. 13). His great sins had undoubtedly "grieved" and vexed the Spirit;

and, had they been continued or not repented of, would have caused him to withdraw himself; but they had not "wholly quenched the Spirit" (1 Thess. v. 19). David was therefore able to pray, as he does, that the Holy Spirit of God might still be vouchsafed to him, and not be "taken away," as from one wholly unworthy.

Ver. 12.—Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. Give me back that "joy" which was mine when I was conscious of thy favour, and felt that thou wert my Strength and my Salvation (Psa. xviii. 1; lxiii. 2, etc.). And uphold me with thy free spirit. There is no "thy" in the original; and it is his own spirit, not God's Spirit, of which the psalmist here speaks. "Uphold me," he says, "preserve me from falling, by giving me a 'free,' or 'generous,' or 'noble' spirit—the opposite of that 'spirit of bondage' which the apostle says that Christians do not receive" (Rom. viii. 15).

Vers. 13—17.—The psalmist now turns from prayer to promise. If God will grant his petitions, restore him to favour, and renew his spiritual life, then he will make such return as is possible to him. First, he will teach transgressors God's ways (ver. 13). Next, he will extol his righteousness, and show forth his praise (vers. 14, 15). Finally, he will offer him, not bloody sacrifice, but the sacrifice in which he delights—"the sacrifice of a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart" (vers. 16, 17). Such sacrifice, he is sure, God will not despise.

Ver. 13.—Then will I teach transgressors thy ways. The truly grateful heart cannot be satisfied without making some return to God for his goodness. The most satisfactory return is by deeds, not words. David's determination is to do his best to promote the glory of God by bringing others to salvation, turning them from their own evil ways to the "ways" that God would have them walk in. And sinners shall be converted unto thee. The result, he hopes, will be the conversion to God of many "sinners" (comp. Ps. xxxii. 8).

Ver. 14.—Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God. In David's mouth this prayer is readily intelligible. In that of Babylonian exiles, the victims of oppression and wrong, it would be most extraordinary. Thou God of my salvation (comp. Psa. xviii. 46; xxv. 5; xxvii. 9; lxxxviii. 1, etc.). And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. In further acknowledgment of God's goodness, and as, in some sort, a return for it, David will employ himself in singing the praises of God (see his many psalms

of praise) and will especially exalt God's righteousness. "Jehovah," as Professor Cheyne observes, "is equally righteous when he sends and when he removes chastisements."

Ver. 15.—O Lord (not *Jehovah*, but *Adonai*), open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. A sense of his guilt has long kept the psalmist's lips closed. Let his sins be forgiven, and his conscience relieved, then praise and thanksgiving will flow from his mouth freely and copiously.

Ver. 16.—For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it. If there had been any sacrifices which God desired or required for such offences as adultery and murder, David would have willingly offered them. But there were none. As Hammond observes, "The Mosaic Law allows no reconciliation, no sacrifice, for such sins." Thou delightest not in burnt offering. In the mere act of sacrifice—the untimely slaying of his own creatures—God could at no time have had any pleasure. His satisfaction could only arise from the spirit in which sacrifices were offered—the gratitude, devotion, self-renunciation, obedience, of those who approached him with them (comp. Ps. xl. 6; I. 8—13; Isa. i. 11—17, etc.).

Ver. 17.—The sacrifices of God; i.e. the sacrifices which God really values and desires. Are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. "The contrite heart," says Hengstenberg, "denotes deep but soft and mild distress." It sets up no wild shriekings, no howls, like those of Oriental fanatics. But it nourishes a sorrow that is deep and persistent. The joy on account of forgiveness and restoration to favour does not exclude continued pain on account of past sin.

Vers. 18, 19.—That this is an addition made to the original psalm, during the time of the Babylonian exile, or later, for liturgical purposes, has been maintained by a large number of the commentators who ascribe the rest of the psalm to David. The chief ground for the supposition is the prayer in ver. 18, "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem," which has been supposed to imply that the walls were in ruins, whereas under David they should have been, it is

thought, in good condition. But it has been pointed out, very justly, that the fortifications of Jerusalem were not complete in David's time, and that both he and Solomon added considerably to them (2 Sam. v. 9; 1 Kings iii. 1; ix. 15, 19). David may well have thought that, as a punishment for his sin, God might interfere with the work which he was doing for the benefit of his people, and hence have felt it needful to pray, "Do good unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem."

Ver. 18.—Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion. It is characteristic of David to pass from prayer for himself to prayer for the people committed to him, and especially to do so at or near the end of a psalm (see Ps. v. 11, 12; xxv. 22; xxviii. 9; xl. 16). And he closely connects—nay, identifies—the people with their capital city (see Ps. xli. 4; xlviii. 11; lxi. 35, etc.). Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Josephus says that David encompassed the whole city of Jerusalem with walls ('Ant. Jud.,' vii. 3, § 2); and we are told, in the Second Book of Samuel, that he "built round about from Millo and inward." It has been argued that his walls were just approaching their completion at the time of his great sin (*Christian Observer*, No. 333).

Ver. 19.—Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness. "Then"—when the walls are completed—thou shalt receive the public sacrifices which will naturally be offered on the accomplishment of such a work (Neh. xii. 43). And these sacrifices, offered willingly by grateful hearts, will be pleasing and acceptable unto thee. With burnt offering, and whole burnt offering. Only the head, the fat, and certain portions of the interior were ordinarily burnt when a victim was offered (Lev. i. 8, 12; iii. 3, 4, etc.); but sometimes, when the offerer's heart was full, and he desired to indicate its complete and undivided surrender to God, the entire victim was consumed (see Hengstenberg, *ad loc.*). Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar. Bullocks, or oxen, were offered on all great occasions (see 2 Sam. xxiv. 22—25; 1 Kings vii. 63; 1 Chron. xxix. 21; 2 Chron. vii. 5; xxxix. 32, 33; xxxv. 7, 9; Ezra vi. 17, etc.).

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The penitent's plea for pardon.* "Have mercy," etc. This psalm is like a page of autobiography written in the author's life-blood. It is, indeed, the utterance of what ver. 17 describes, "a broken and a contrite heart." Nowhere in the Old Testament Scriptures do we find so profound depth and tenderness of penitence, joined

with such childlike faith in God's pardoning mercy. If the dark record of David's crime had been silently omitted, we should have been utterly at a loss to understand this psalm. Who could have thought that from the same harp which uttered the sweet strain of Ps. xxiii. could proceed so deep a wail of grief and self-abasement? Yet it is just because David's joy in God and love to God were so real that his repentance was so bitter. No hypocrite could have penned this psalm. Any one who calls David a hypocrite shows dense ignorance of human nature.

I. THE PENITENT'S PLEA FOR PARDON. "According to thy loving-kindness [or, 'mercy']; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies [or, 'compassions'],." He has nothing to plead in defence or palliation. God's mercy and pity are his sole hope. What warrant has he to expect them? Answer: God's covenant with Israel. Such sins as David's (murder and adultery) could not be purged by sacrifice (see Heb. x. 28). And while under the condemnation of such guilt, it would have been vain presumption to offer peace offerings. Ver. 16 may include both. But the whole law of sacrifice revealed God's delight in mercy, while it foreshadowed the true atonement. The gospel puts this plea in our mouth in a new form. It supplies an incomparably more glorious warrant and encouragement than the Old Testament believer possessed—the *atonement* which God himself has provided (2 Cor. v. 21; Eph. i. 7; Rom. v. 8).

II. THE UNLIMITED EFFICACY OF THIS PLEA. It is difficult to imagine sins more heinous than those of which David had been guilty. Their guilt was enormously aggravated by the fact that he was the divinely chosen king of the chosen people, an inspired prophet, and the object of signal and unrivalled blessings from God. Perhaps we have sometimes wished this dark page of Scripture had remained unwritten. But there it stands, to teach us that no sinner need despair of God's mercy. The door at which David entered is wide enough for every true penitent. So St. Paul points to his own case as an encouragement to all (1 Tim. i. 15, 16).

III. THE EXCLUSIVE ADEQUACY OF THIS PLEA. It admits no addition, no partnership, no substitute. It is this or none (Rom. iii. 23—26). By one sin, St. James teaches us, God's Law is as completely broken as by many (Jas. ii. 10). Therefore only the blood which cleanses from *all* sin (1 John i. 7) can cleanse from *any* (Titus iii. 4—7). In the heavenly world there will be immense differences in glory and happiness, according to attainment and service. But in this respect—the ground of pardon and salvation—all stand on one level; all join in one song (Rev. i. 5, 6; v. 9).

The folly and guilt of impenitence appear most of all in this—that it is a despising of God's mercy and compassion (Rom. ii. 4).

Ver. 10.—*Prayer for a pure heart.* "Create in me," etc. Human life belongs to two different worlds, distinct, yet inseparably interwoven—the world of outward nature, and the world of inward experience. Since this psalm was written, amazing changes have passed on outward nature in relation to man's life; but the world of inward experience is substantially unchanged. Even within half a century or less, human labour, discovery, and invention have so modified our relations to the globe we inhabit, and to the forces of nature, that we sometimes say we live in a different world. But the great inner world of joy and sorrow, love and hate, faith and unbelief, nobleness and baseness, holiness and sin, is the same in England to-day as in Judæa three thousand years ago. It has not ceased to be true that—"As in water," etc. (Prov. xxvii. 19). There is still the same room and need for the prayer of the text. It is still true that it is a prayer which only the Spirit of God could *inspire*, can *fulfil*, or can *interpret*.

I. A PRAYER WHICH ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT COULD INSPIRE. How else can it be rationally accounted for? A prayer to God as Creator, for spiritual purity and rectitude: "a clean heart and a right spirit." Whence came these ideas? Still more, whence came these desires? It is easy to answer—They were suggested by the purifications ordained by the Law of Moses; sprinkling with blood, with the water of purification in which the ashes of the heifer had been steeped, and "divers washings." But even supposing these rites could have originated the notion of inward purity and spiritual holiness, how could they create any corresponding desire? But, in fact, these spiritual ideas were the very *meaning* of those rites, for the sake of which they were

ordained (see e.g. Exod. xix. 5, 10, 11). It has been asserted by scholars, who ought to know better, that the original notion of sin, in the Old Testament Scriptures and among the ancient Hebrews, was merely ceremonial. The doctrine of the inward, spiritual nature of sin, and need of inward purification, was gradually developed, it is said, by the prophets. No assertion can be more baseless. Of all the words (not fewer than ten) used in the sacred tongue to express *sin*, not one originally refers to *outward defilements*; all are moral. The three principal occur in *vera*. 1, 2 (comp. Pa. xxxii. 1, 2; Exod. xxxiv. 7). (1) "*Transgression*," equivalent to "rebellion," viz. against God (cf. 2 Kings viii. 20 for Hebrew word). (2) "*Iniquity*," equivalent to "perverseness"—crooked and unjust thought or action. (3) "*Sin*," equivalent to "error"—missing the mark.<sup>1</sup> These are moral, not ceremonial ideas. The notion of *pollution* or *defilement* by crime was familiar among ancient heathen nations. But it was external, to be removed by outward ceremonies (see the story in Herodotus, i. 35—44). David felt that his heart, his spirit, his inmost self, needed cleansing and renewal, which God alone could impart.

II. A PRAYER WHICH ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN FULFIL. David begins (*vera*. 1—9) by asking for Divine *mercy*; here he invokes Divine *power*. He uses the strongest term possible, "create." The same life-breathing Spirit who brooded over the dark waters at the first creation (Gen. i. 2) must descend on man's dark, sinful heart, and breathe life into it (2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. ii. 1, 5, 10). Our Saviour expresses the same great spiritual change as a *new birth* (John iii. 3, 5—8). Thus the Old Testament here anticipates the deepest teaching of the New. But there is another side, equally recognized in Scripture (Ezek. xvii. 31; Isa. i. 16). As strongly in the New Testament (Jas. iv. 4, 8; 1 John iii. 3). God does not deal with men as machines or statues. God speaks to men, beseeches, warns, invites. Our Saviour did so, even to the very persons he described as *closing their eyes*, etc. (Matt. xiii. 15). It is by the reception of Divine truth that the heart is purified, spiritual life conveyed (1 Pet. i. 22; Jas. i. 18; John vi. 63). This cannot take place passively and unconsciously. Still, when all is said, *life* can come only from God (Ps. xxxvi. 9; Ezek. xi. 19). David's prayer goes to the central depth, the innermost need of our nature. Our reason is incompetent to reconcile these opposite views (Divine grace and human will); but St. Paul shows their *practical* harmony (Phil. ii. 12, 13).

III. A PRAYER WHICH ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN INTERPRET, AND TEACH US TO MAKE OUR OWN. Inspiration is as needful to *readers* as to *writers* of the Scriptures; not the same, but as real. The inspiration of the *writer* of this psalm we do not need. Here is the psalm, perfect, unrivalled, unexhausted. But before David wrote it he *prayed* it and *felt* it. We need that inspiration which taught him to pour out this prayer into God's ear (Rom. viii. 26). "A clean heart." In the earlier part of the psalm, washing and cleansing are the images of *forgiveness* (so Isa. i. 8; 1 John i. 7). But here, of *renewal*, spiritual purity (2 Cor. vii. 1). As the former prayer expresses *sense of guilt*, and desire for God's favour; so this *sense of the foul impurity* and hatefulness of sin, and desire for God's likeness. See what follows.

REMARKS. 1. The utterance of this prayer with no sense of sin, no longing for holiness, would be mockery. If you feel you cannot *honestly* utter it, what you have to do is to ask that God's Holy Spirit will teach and enable you (John xvi. 8, 9). 2. If this is truly your prayer, the Holy Spirit must have taught you. And the prayers he teaches carry the earnest of their fulfilment.

Ver. 12.—*The joy of God's salvation*. "Restore," etc. Two opposite kinds of experience are wonderfully blended in this psalm—the experience of a conscience-stricken transgressor, and the experience of a believer rejoicing in Divine mercy. Nothing can be more mournful than David's profound self-abasement and piercing cry for pardon. Nothing can be more calm, hopeful, restful, than his trust in God's forgiving and restoring grace. He is like one emerging from a gloomy cavern, where no ray of light shone, who does not yet stand in the sunlight, but sees it shining at the cave's mouth, and knows that a few more steps will bring him into full sunshine. The secret of this blending of opposite experiences is that David is looking so earnestly away from himself to God. In regard to his crimes, he looks not at the wrong done to fellow-mortals,

<sup>1</sup> Not "defilement," as the 'Speaker's Commentary' unaccountably explains.

but at his *sin* against God (ver. 4). And in regard to salvation, he does not measure his expectation by anything he can offer to God—repentance or amendment or atonement—but by the infinite fullness of God's love and grace. Therefore he is able to ask, not merely for pardon, to have his forfeited life and crown spared, but for full restoration to the happy consciousness of God's favour. The prayer of this verse is—

I. A YEARNING AFTER LOST JOY. It breathes a desolate sense of loss. Consider who utters it. This is not the sentimental moan of a recluse, morbidly poring over his inward experience. Not the visionary craving of a heart ignorant of life and of the world. Not the reactionary disgust of a worn-out worldling. If any man ever knew the world and enjoyed it, David did. The experience of even his wise son Solomon was limited compared with his. Endowed with personal grace and beauty which won love at first sight; a man of genius, skilful in poetry and music; a hero in war, who had fought his way from the sheepfold to the throne;—he was in the heyday of prosperity and power. His armies and generals won victories for him, while he enjoyed the luxury of his palace. His servants devotedly obeyed, even when he required them to commit crimes. He had obtained the wife on whom his heart was passionately set. A son had been born to them. It might seem as though God had overlooked his sins, and was shedding on him the peaceful light of Divine favour. True, his sins—nay, crimes—had “made the enemies of the Lord blaspheme;” but their counter-censures did not reach the royal ears. When the Prophet Nathan stood before him, and told his touching parable, David had no suspicion that it was aimed at himself (2 Sam. xii. 5). What lacked he, in the midst of his prosperity? Two things—one of which the ungodly reckon a trifle, and the other the worldly regard as illusion—peace of conscience, and the sense of Divine favour, what in happier days he called “the light of God's countenance.” When Nathan's rebuke, like lightning from a clear sky, smote him, “Thou art the man!” it was as though the whole fabric of his earthly bliss melted like a dream, leaving him alone with these two—conscious guilt and Divine displeasure. Preachers are often reproached with denouncing a world they do not know; decriing pleasures and wealth they would only be too glad to share. At all events, you cannot say this of David. The tide of worldly joy is at full with him, yet he is broken-hearted. He has lost what the world could not give, and all the world cannot make up for. “Restore,” he cries, “the joy of thy salvation!”

II. AN UTTERANCE OF STRONG FAITH IN GOD. That it was possible for a godly man, a man whom the Holy Spirit inspired to compose psalms which are among the most sacred treasures of the Church, to fall as David fell, is a tremendous warning that neither grace nor gifts are any security to one who neglects to watch and pray. Nevertheless, it is impossible that an ungodly man could have written this psalm. Even a new convert, pierced with the pangs of a first repentance, could not have written it. David's self-abasement is measured by the height from which he has fallen. A penitent with no previous experience of communion with God would have thought more of his crimes against men, less of his sin against God. In David's view, the former seems swallowed up in the latter (ver. 4). Here is not mere *feeling*, but *faith*, as enlightened as simple, equally convinced of God's *willingness to forgive*, and of his *power to restore*. David asks for both, expects both. Nowhere can you find more clearly discriminated, more inseparably united, these two great gifts of God which together make up *salvation*—forgiveness and renewal; righteousness and holiness; deliverance from the guilt of sin; and cleansing from its defilements (vers. 1, 2, 9, 10). See the contrast between remorse and repentance; the first akin to pride and despair; the second to humility and hope. See, too, the close union of humility and faith. As a grain of sand in the eye blots the sunlight, so a grain of self-righteousness would have marred David's trust. The key-note of the psalm is the opening plea, “According to thy loving-kindness.”

III. THE VOICE OF GOD'S OWN SPIRIT. The cry, “Take not,” etc. (ver. 11), could not come from a heart destitute of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God speaks here through the whole man; his deepest experience is made transparent. Prophets were sometimes inspired to deliver messages they did not understand. Not so here. The Holy Spirit has dipped his pen in the heart, and written with life-blood. This is what makes this psalm so precious. A candid, thoughtful sceptic would do well to study this psalm carefully, deeply; not its mere language, but its spirit. Can it be explained on mere natural principles, apart from Divine inspiration of some kind? Have we here

a simply human or a supernatural experience? Nothing like it is to be found in classic literature; nothing in the sacred books of the East. A soul face to face with God, broken-hearted because of sin, not chiefly as crime or as defilement (though both are profoundly felt), but supremely as sin against the righteous and holy God; yet taking refuge in God, with confident hope of pardon, spiritual renewal, and joy in God's favour—this experience is distinctly superhuman, supernatural. Therefore is it full of encouragement. If it were David's alone, this would be no ground to think it may be ours. But the same Spirit who taught him thus to feel, thus to believe, thus to pray, is promised "to them that ask."

Ver. 17.—"*The sacrifices of God,*" etc. We may call this psalm "the penitent's prayer-book." The spectacle of a good man falling into open sin is a sight to make angels weep, especially a man so distinguished as David falling into sins so gross and flagrant. We are ready to ask why a veil of silence was not allowed to hide this shameful example. This psalm supplies a twofold answer: the record of David's profound humiliation and bitter repentance is a warning to those who "think they stand;" his humble but assured faith in God's pardoning mercy is an encouragement to those who know they have fallen. We could none of us afford to lose this page out of the Bible. No part of Old Testament Scripture enters more deeply into the spiritual life. These words set before us—

I. WHAT THE SINNER CANNOT OFFER TO GOD. He can make no atonement for his sin, fulfil no duty that can be accepted as a counterpoise to his transgression. He has no hope but in the simple undeserved mercy of God (ver. 16). The word here for "sacrifice" is general, including sin offerings, Passover lambs, thank offerings—any sacrifice in which the victim was *slain* (so 1 Sam. iii. 14; Exod. xii. 27; this is overlooked by some good writers). The sin offerings appointed by the Law provided for sins of ignorance, infirmity, and error, not for wilful transgressions of known law ("with a high hand") (Lev. iv. 2; Numb. xv. 27, 30). They were not designed to interfere with the course of civil justice; otherwise religion and law would have been in open conflict (Heb. x. 28). Therefore crimes like David's—adultery and murder, for either of which the Law sentenced him to death—could not be purged by sacrifice. He deserved to die, and he knew it. He casts himself on the sovereign mercy of God: "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness!" (ver. 14).

II. WHAT THE SINNER CAN OFFER TO GOD, AND GOD WILL ACCEPT. "A broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart." Why is this called a "sacrifice"—a consecrated gift to God? 1. Because we glorify God by frank, full acknowledgment that his Law is holy, his authority supreme, and that he may justly condemn and punish (see ver. 4). David had deeply sinned against men; but he seems to lose sight of this in the awful overwhelming view of his guilt against God (cf. Josh. vii. 19). 2. Because this "broken and contrite heart" implies the full giving up of ourselves to God, not only that he may forgive our sin, set us free from the burden of guilt, but that he may "renew a right spirit within" us (vers. 9—12), that he may make us wholly his own (cf. Rom. xii. 1). Note that this word "sacrifice" does not of *itself* mean atonement. That meaning *was* given to sacrifice by express Divine teaching (Lev. xvii. 11).

III. THE DEEPEST PENITENCE—the truest sense of guilt and shame and grief for sin—is consistent with boundless faith in God's forgiving mercy. If ever there was the utterance of a broken, contrite heart, it is this psalm. No hypocrite, no ungodly man, could possibly have written it. No, nor yet a sincere godly penitent, without a mighty inspiration of God's Spirit. And the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, breathes into the broken heart the healing balm of hope, trust, joy, and thankfulness. David, who dares not offer a sacrifice until he knows that he is forgiven, looks forward to the time when he shall offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, peace offerings, and whole burnt offerings; when God will bless him in his work of building the holy city, and will himself bless and guard Jerusalem (vers. 18, 19), without which verses the psalm would be maimed and incomplete.

IV. The WARRANT OF THIS ASSURED FAITH is found, not in the sinner's repentance, but in God's mercy and promise (ver. 1). Nathan had been commissioned to assure David of pardon as well as to charge him with his sin (2 Sam. xii. 13). If David had asked how it could be *right* and *just* for God thus to pardon crimes which, as king,

David himself would have been bound to punish in another man, we know not what answer he could have found, except to say, "God is Sovereign!" The gospel alone reveals how God is "just, and the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 23—26). It was a wonderful new doctrine which the apostles proclaimed, that sins for which the Law of Moses provided no sin offerings are atoned for by him (Acts xiii. 38, 39). "All sin" (1 John i. 7). God has himself provided the Sacrifice which all the sacrifices of the Law faintly foreshadowed (John i. 29). Therefore the sacrifice of one contrite heart and of one joyful tongue, blemished, blind, lame, though it too often is, is acceptable to God, because our High Priest ever lives to intercede.

Ver. 18.—*Relations of ruler and people.* "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion," etc. This psalm would be very defective if it ended without such a prayer as this. For David the penitent transgressor, David the inspired psalmist, was also David the anointed of God, king of his people Israel. Modern criticism, eager to use its sharp shears, would cut away these two verses as added by a later hand. But modern criticism, keen and accomplished as it is, is sorely lacking in sympathy and imagination. As matter of history, David's work of "building the walls of Jerusalem" was left incomplete, and finished by Solomon (2 Sam. v. 9; 1 Kings ix. 15; xi. 27). But he knew and felt that the true wall of Zion was God's protection (Ps. cxiv. 2). And as his people Israel had shared the shame, though not the guilt, of his crimes, he trusted they would share the blessing of God's pardoning mercy and restoring grace. (With ver. 19 comp. 2 Sam. xxiv. 25; 1 Kings iii. 15; viii. 63.) We are reminded—

I. NATIONS SUFFER THROUGH THEIR RULERS' SINS. What is guilt in the ruler is calamity for the people. This is not arbitrary or unjust. It is but a case of the *great law of solidarity* pervading human life (Rom. xiv. 7). So with the parent and the family, teacher and scholars, head of a business and all in his employ. Power and privilege mean tremendous responsibility. No men have such heavy burdens as rulers, and few get less sympathy.

II. NATIONAL SAFETY LIES IN GOD'S PROTECTION. Scarcely even the history of Israel illustrates this more wonderfully than the history of our own nation.

III. PRAYER FOR OUR COUNTRY IS A WEIGHTY DUTY, A HIGH PRIVILEGE, AND CLAIMS A CONSTANT PLACE IN OUR PUBLIC, FAMILY, PRIVATE DEVOTIONS. (Ps. cxii. 6.) Yet a venerable Jewish tradition. It belongs to the time when the temple at Jerusalem had not even been thought of. The tabernacle was at Nob, not far from the Mount of Olives (1 Sam. xxi.; 'Handbook to Bible,' p. 277). It is possible to maintain Christian life in secrecy and solitude. But that is not what the New Testament describes as history, and reveals as Christ's will. It is neither natural nor safe. Mushrooms may grow in cellars; not fruit trees. The embodiment of spiritual life in fellowship is one of the most remarkable presentments of the New Testament records. Wherever the gospel took root, the fence of Church fellowship was built round it, not by man's wisdom, but by him who said, "I will build my Church."

IV. THEREFORE THE ROOT OF CHRISTIAN LIFE, THE SECRET OF ITS FULLNESS, BEAUTY, FRUIT-BEARING, IS PERSONAL FAITH. "I will trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." The olive did not grow *because* it was planted in the house of the Lord, but *because* God put the hidden life into the seed. Church forms are but a delusion and a danger, if trusted in, to those who are strangers to the hidden life (Gal. ii. 20).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—19.—This might be called *the minister's psalm*. We may imagine the servant of the Lord engaged in devout meditation. He looks before and after. He communes with himself as to his life and work. The deepest thoughts of his heart are revealed.

I. EVER-GROWING SENSE OF THE EVIL OF SIN. Sin is thought of in the abstract, and its badness is seen. It is looked at in the world, in society, in the Church, and more and more its evils are discerned. But worst of all, it is felt to belong to one's self—"My sin."

II. DEEPER SYMPATHY WITH ALL TRUE SEEKERS AFTER TRUTH AND HOLINESS. The task is noble, but difficult. Only those who have tried know *how* difficult. There

are not only obstacles without, but there is the fearful obstacle within of a sinful heart.

III. TRUER REALIZATION OF THE GREATNESS OF THE WORK OF RESTORATION. Experience is the best teacher. It is better to judge from fact than from theory. Such as have themselves been "restored" are the fittest to speak of restoration. They know that the work is possible, though hard, for they themselves have experienced it. Like John Newton, the minister may take heart in time of despondency: "God has converted *me*, therefore I can never doubt of his power to convert the greatest sinner." This was Paul's argument (1 Tim. i. 15, 16).

IV. THE NECESSITY OF NEW AND THOROUGH CONSECRATION. Looking to the past, there is much to humble us. Looking to God, there is everything to encourage us. We need to give ourselves anew to Christ. Opportunities are precious. To save ourselves from "bloodguiltiness," we must pray more and watch more. The nearer we live to God, the more interested we shall be in God's work.

V. INCREASED DELIGHT IN CARRYING THE MESSAGE OF PEACE TO SINNERS. What we prize ourselves we commend to others. The peace we enjoy we would have others enjoy also. The freedom and the bright hopes that cheer our path we would gladly impart to others. When pressed with the burden of our own sins, we are under restraint; but when freed from guilt and fear, we can plead for God with boldness.

VI. CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S LOVE AND POWER AS A SAVIOUR. Our highest ambition is to "convert" sinners, not to a Creed, or a party, or a Church, but to God. "To thee." But this is God's work. He only is able to make the Word effectual unto salvation. Having the witness in our own hearts of his saving might, we speak with all boldness. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

VII. BRIGHTER HOPES OF THE FUTURE. There is a good time coming. The hope of this springs immortal in the hearts of the redeemed. When we are low, we take low views of things. If it be a dark time with ourselves, we are apt to despond as to the work of God in others. But when we are lifted up, all things seem possible. The future grows bright and yet brighter before us, and our hearts are thrilled with a foretaste of celestial joys. "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!"—W. F.

Ver. 3.—*A portrait.* Lord Macaulay tells us that the Earl of Breadalbane, who was the chief hand in the Massacre of Glencoe, never had rest afterwards. "He did his best to assume an air of unconcern. He made his appearance in the most fashionable coffee-house in Edinburgh, and talked loudly and self-complacently about the important service in which he had been engaged in the mountains. Some of his soldiers, however, who observed him closely, whispered that all this bravery was put on. He was not the man that he had been before that night. The form of his countenance was changed. In all places, at all hours, whether he waked or slept, *Glencoe was for ever before him*" (vol. iii. p. 216). So it was also with David. As Chrysostom has said, "He carried in his bosom a painted picture of adultery and murder." Let us consider this.

I. THE SUBJECT OF THE PAINTING. Sin is everywhere. It is in the world, in society, in our friends, but worst of all it is in our own hearts. "My sin!" What is "before" us is not the sins of others, but our own sins, or perhaps some particular sin that stands out in all its hideousness and enormity.

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE PAINTING IS BROUGHT OUT. It is not said before the world or the Church, but "before me." Everything is individualized.

"Awakened conscience acts the artist,  
Uses the sun of heaven's law  
To photograph the sinner's life;  
Then holds it up, a hideous monster,  
To the affrighted eye!"

But conscience has its allies. There is *memory*. All that we have thought and felt and done, all the varied events and experiences of our life, are recorded by memory. Much may seem to be forgotten, but nothing is really lost. Go where you will—

"Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,  
For you a stately gallery maintain of gay and tragic pictures."



"My sin!" It is there, in memory, to be brought out at the call of co. science.

"The austere remembrance of that deed  
Will hang upon thy spirit like a cloud,  
And tinge its world of happy images with hues of horror."

There is also *association*. One of its chief uses is to add force to conscience. We are strangely linked with the past. A book will recall the giver. A letter will start various trains of thought, according to its contents and the circumstances in which it is received. A portrait will bring up memories of the departed. Remember how Cowper's heart was moved by the portrait of his mother—"faithful remembrancer of one so dear." So it is as to our sin. The place, the surroundings, the circumstances, or some link of association, may bring all the past before us fresh as a yesterday event. Remember Pharaoh's butler (Gen. xli. 9), the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings xvii. 18), Peter the apostle (Mark xiv. 72). And what is presented to conscience by memory and association, the *imagination* works out with powerful effect, bringing in not only the past, but the future, the terrible result. But besides all this, we are to take into account the hand of God, working by conscience through providence and Holy Scripture. David's eyes were opened by the ministry of Nathan. He presented his sin to him in a parable, and then brought it home to himself in demonstration of the Spirit. "Thou art the man!" And so it is still. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin;" "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." We have a striking illustration of this in Augustine ('Confessions,' bk. viii. ch. 7): "Thou, O Lord, whilst he was speaking, didst turn me round towards myself, taking me from behind my back, where I had placed me, unwilling to observe myself, and setting me before my face, that I might see how foul I was, how crooked and defiled, hespotted and ulcerous." Sooner or later, this vision will come to us all. "My sin is ever before me." This may be the cry in the torments of hell, and then there is no hope. It may be said under the power of a guilty conscience, and then the answer is, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

III. THE FEELINGS WITH WHICH THIS PAINTING SHOULD BE CONTEMPLATED. The sight is painful, but salutary. If it humbles us, it leads us to exalt God. If it embitters sin to us, it endears Christ to us, and binds us for ever to him in love and devotion. 1. *Sense of personal guilt*. "My sin." We may have been tempted; but in the deepest sense the guilt is ours, surely and inalienably. Our sins are more our own than anything else we possess. With this conviction we cry, "What shall we do?" 2. *Grief and self-abasement*. Others may speak of "my place," "my merits," "my services;" but for me it is "my sin." The more we study this picture—looking at it in the light of the cross—the more vile and wicked do we become in our own eyes. We see ourselves as God sees us, and are filled with amazement and horror. Besides, we come to understand that our sin is not a casual thing, but the product of the sinful heart within. True grief will lead to sincere and full confession, and confession to forgiveness. When we justify God, God will justify us. 3. *Simple and unfeigned faith*. Despairing of ourselves, we cease from our own works, and cast ourselves upon the mercy of God. We accept the testimony which God has given of his Son, and, trusting in him, we find peace. 4. *Adoring gratitude and love*. To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. We owe everything to Christ, and the love of Christ constraineth us (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). The thought of the sins of the past, which we carry with us, will not only make us humble and watchful, but stimulate us to increasing love and zeal in the service of him who hath redeemed us by his precious blood.—W. F.

Vers. 5—7.—*Secrets of the heart*. "Behold!" This is a word of power. It takes hold. It demands attention. It marks the solemnity and seriousness of the things to be brought before us. The veil is so far lifted. In the light of God, we get glimpses into the awful secrets of the heart.

I. THE SECRET OF SIN IS FOUND IN THE CORRUPT HEART. The first thing that startles and staggers us *may* be some actual transgression; but as we consider the matter, we are forced back and back, and closer and closer, till we end with the corrupt heart. Sin is everywhere; but always, when we seek its origin, we come to the same

source. We may not be able to explain fully why and how the heart is corrupt, but of the fact there can be no question. It is better to seek deliverance from the pit, than to weary and vex ourselves in vain with inquiries how we came there.

II. THAT THE EVIL OF SIN IS SEEN IN THE CONTRADICTION OF TRUTH. What God desires must be right and good. But instead of "truth in the inward parts," it is the opposite. Instead of law, there is self-will; instead of order, there is confusion; instead of the unity of the Spirit, there is enmity and strife. The mind and the will are in contradiction to God. It is this that makes the disease so desperate, and the remedy so difficult (Gen. xvii. 9). We might make clean the outside of the cup, but it remains defiled within. We may whitewash the sepulchre, but after all it is a sepulchre, full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. Helpless, and well-nigh despairing, our cry is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?"

III. THAT DELIVERANCE FROM SIN CAN ONLY BE EFFECTED BY THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S AUTHORITY IN THE HEART. Healing that does not go to the root of the disease is vain and delusive. The heart must be made right or nothing is right. This is the work of God through Christ Jesus (Rom. vi. 8—14). It is not slight, or half-and-half work, but thorough. We cannot serve two masters. But by the grace of Christ we are saved from the bondage and misery of our old master, and God is again enthroned in our hearts as our true and rightful Lord, whose service is perfect freedom, and whose rewards are peace and joy for evermore.—W. F.

Ver. 7.—"*Whiter than snow.*" Snow is remarkable for whiteness. As it glistens on the mountains, or lies in virgin purity on the fields, what can compare with it? And yet David speaks of something whiter. Where? Not in nature, but in the kingdom of grace. Of whom? Not Christ, not the holy angels, not the saints in glory, but, strange to say, of himself. Like Paul, he was "the chief of sinners," and he was, therefore, the fitter ensample of the marvellous kindness and grace of God. In his prayer we find—

I. THE RECOIL OF THE SOUL FROM SIN. Many find pleasure in sin; but when once the soul is quickened, there is an end to this. Sin is felt to be vile and loathsome. Its touch is defilement; its presence is abhorrent; its effects are dreaded as the most terrible.

II. THE YEARNING OF THE SOUL FOR PURITY. All things around us that retain their freshness and their purity condemn us and put us to shame. They show what we have lost; they intensify our pains and our sorrows. At the same time, they help to keep alive our hopes. While they testify that we are fallen, they testify also that sin is not of our true nature—that it is not something that rightly belongs to us, but that it should be abjured and abhorred. The more we compare ourselves with God's Law, and the more truly we realize God's will concerning us, the more earnestly shall we cry for deliverance.

III. THE SUPREME TRUST OF THE SOUL IN GOD. There is the cry, "Wash me!" This implies weakness and submission. We cannot "wash" ourselves. Our tears and prayers, our penitences and endeavours, are in vain. We cast ourselves implicitly upon God. Let God, who is holy and good, do this great thing for us, and do it in his own way. It is not the priest, it is not the saints; God only can save. There is also the *glad faith*. "And I shall be whiter than snow." The lost purity will be restored. What God does, he does perfectly. What joy in being "whiter than snow"!—not only pardoned (Isa. i. 18), but cleansed (1 John i. 7; Rev. vii. 14). It is heaven begun.—W. F.

Vers. 10, 17.—*True prayer.* Prayer is the index of the heart. When true, it is the "heart's sincere desire," and expresses not only the feeling, but the cry of the soul to God.

I. THE PRAYER HERE IS THOROUGH-GOING. It is not pardon that is asked—that has been obtained; but renewal. It is not present relief that is craved, but complete restoration, such a change wrought in the heart as is equivalent to a reconstruction, and as will re-establish and fix the right relation to God for evermore.

II. THIS PRAYER IS FOUNDED ON GOD'S PROMISES. We should only ask for things agreeable to God's will. Here we can have no doubt. What God wants is a "clean

heart." What God delights in is "a broken and a contrite heart." When we look to ourselves, and remember God's command, "Make you clean" (Isa. i. 16); "Make you a new heart" (Ezek. xviii. 31), we are filled with despair. But when we look to God, and remember his promises, "A new heart will I give you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26), hope springs up anew. God's commands are not the commands of a tyrant like Pharaoh (Exod. v. 6—8), but of a Father great in love as in power. We should put his commands and his promises side by side, and then we have confidence that what we ask we shall receive.

III. THIS PRAYER IMPLIES COMPLETE SELF-SURRENDER TO THE WILL AND WAYS OF GOD. God is sovereign and holy. He has his own ways of working. We must be brought low before we are raised up. We must be emptied of self before we can be filled with the fulness of God. There will be not only the Word which quickeneth, but the rod which disciplineth (ver. 8).

IV. THIS PRAYER, FINALLY, LEADS TO A NEW LIFE OF LOVE AND OBEDIENCE. Life is made a sacrifice (Rom. xii. 1)—offered, not on the altar of burnt offering, but upon the golden altar of incense; not as an atonement, for Christ's blood alone maketh atonement, but as a thanksgiving for redemption.—W. F.

Vers. 11, 12.—*A great evil deprecated, and a great good desired.* I. A GREAT EVIL DEPRECATED. The evil is twofold (ver. 11). It is felt that this judgment is deserved. God might justly do this. His presence had been outraged; his Spirit had been not only resisted and grieved, but for a time quenched. But such judgment would be utter ruin and woe, and it is shrunk from with horror. To be "cast away" was ruin, but to have "the Spirit taken away" was to have that ruin made complete and irremediable. It is only those who have the Spirit, and who know something of the joys of God's presence, that can truly utter this prayer.

II. A GREAT GOOD DESIRED. The good is also twofold, meeting and matching the evil. "Salvation," with its joys, is the remedy for the dreaded casting away. God's free Spirit, with his loving and gracious upholding, is the sure deliverance from the woes of desertion. This prayer is very *bold*. At the very time when hanging on the verge of the precipice, the cry is made, not for arrestment, not for delay, not for mere mercy, but for complete restoration. The prayer is also *far-reaching*. It looks on. It sees dangers ahead. It contemplates the possibility of further sins and falls. But it also sees how all trials can be met and all *temptation* vanquished. The believer stands, as it were, on the Delectable Mountains, and sees the path clear before him; with the heavenly city gleaming bright in the distance. The prayer is urged with *childlike trust and confidence*. There is the consciousness of willingness, and, if the soul is willing, God must be willing also. What we desire, he who kindled the desire is able to accomplish. It is as when a child, with a sense of weakness, but with clinging love and trust, says to its father, "I am afraid." Take my hand. Guide me in the dark. Uphold me lest I fall. I cannot walk alone." Thus *peace and joy* are brought to the heart. The believer, committing himself to the fatherly care of God, can tread with a free soul and a joyous step the way set before him, knowing that it leads to glory, honour, and immortality. In this great prayer there is hope for the chief of sinners, and comfort for the most troubled of saints.—W. F.

Vers. 1—8.—*Repentance and forgiveness.* Some deny the Davidic origin of this psalm; but most refer it to the time when Nathan charged David with the sins of adultery and murder. In these verses we have set forth the nature of *forgiveness*, and the nature of *repentance*.

I. PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS. 1. *Forgiveness is the inward and outward cleansing from sin.* It is *blotting out* a record or a debt that is against us—that is, the outward cleansing. And it is a *washing*, or *cleansing*, or *purging*—that is, the inward forgiveness, or the taking away of sin. So that it is a double work. 2. *When we become conscious of such forgiveness, we rejoice with a great gladness.* (Ver. 8.) The strength (bones) which sin has broken is restored and rejoices.

II. THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE. 1. *It is a trust in the Divine goodness and mercy.* (Ver. 1.) Sorrow for sin without hope in God is remorse and death—not repentance. 2. *A consciousness that our sin is more against God than against man.*

(Ver. 4.) "Inasmuch as ye did it against one of the least of these," etc. 3. *An acknowledgment of the Divine righteousness in the punishment he has suffered.* (Ver. 21.) 4. *He not only confesses the sinful deed, but traces it to the inheritance of a nature sinfully inclined.* (Ver. 5.) 5. *He prays for inward truthfulness and wisdom as his only safety for the future* (ver. 6).—S.

Vers. 9—12.—*Renewal and elevation.* True repentance is not satisfied with the knowledge of forgiveness, but goes on to seek the renewal and elevation of the nature that has sinned and fallen into disorder.

I. HE SEEKS A NEW REVELATION OF THE FORCE OR FAVOUR OF GOD. (Ver. 9.) "Do not look upon me in anger for my sins, so as to bring me into judgment, but lift upon me the glory of thy face, or presence." And to this end—

II. "CREATE IN ME A PURE HEART, THAT I MAY BE ABLE TO SEE THEE." (Ver. 10; Matt. v. 8.)

III. "GIVE ME AGAIN A STEADFAST SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE TO THY WILL." (Ver. 10.) A strong spirit not easily swayed to and fro through its own weakness, or by the gusts of temptations, but persistent in right aims and endeavours.

IV. HE PRAYS THAT HE MAY NEVER LOSE THE SUCCOUR AND STRENGTH OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT. (Ver. 11.) Such a prayer on the lips of David could not mean all that it means now to a Christian. Christ has revealed the work and the necessity of the Divine Strengtheners (the Paraclete) far more clearly than it was known to David. As the Teacher of the truth and the Helper of our weakness.

V. HE PRAYS FOR THAT SENSE OF JOY WHICH IS UNITED WITH THE SPIRIT OF A FREE OBEDIENCE. (Ver. 12.) Our spirits attain to their greatest freedom when under the influence of the Spirit of God—like water heated by fire.—S.

Ver. 12.—*The joy of salvation.* "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with a joyful [willing] spirit."

I. THAT THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SALVATION IS ACCOMPANIED WITH A GREATER OR LESS DEGREE OF "JOY." Salvation is a deliverance from the greatest danger the soul can apprehend, and is, therefore, a cause of the most rapturous joy the soul can feel. It is preceded, in the majority of cases, by terror of the Divine anger; by the despair awakened by guilt; by the deep sorrow which distraction brings after it; till the revelation of the Divine mercy through Jesus Christ is embraced, and the way of escape is known, and then the soul is unable to restrain its joy. This is the outward aspect of salvation. Salvation as an *inward fact* is the enjoyment of a new state of the affections towards Christ, or *love to God*. And this is a perpetual spring of ever-increasing joy. Joy may become not a momentary rapture merely.

II. THAT BY THE INDULGENCE OF SIN WE FORFEIT THE JOY OF SALVATION. We may not utterly forfeit the *hope* of salvation; for hope is a thing of degrees: how long a faint hope may linger, and in connection with how much sin, is a practical question difficult of determination! The question of our personal salvation may become even to ourselves a very debatable, doubtful question, a struggle of hope against despair. Here certainly the *joy* of salvation is forfeited. Then, again, though the hope may not be gone, there may be so much remorse and sorrow in consequence of sin as to destroy all the *joy* which is connected with an assured state of the heart.

III. ON WHAT GROUND CAN WE PRAY GOD TO RESTORE WHAT WE HAVE SINFULLY LOST? 1. *That God is the Author of all renewal and salvation in man's soul.* This prayer is therefore a prayer for the renewal of the influence and work of the Holy Spirit: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." It is called God's salvation for which he prays. 2. *This prayer for joy presupposes that which is the condition of all real joy.* The previous work of deep, genuine sorrow—repentance and hatred of the sin which has caused the sorrow. This is the unalterable condition on which we obtain any lasting joy.

IV. THAT THE RECOVERY OF THIS JOY IS NECESSARY TO OUR FUTURE CONSTANCY. "Uphold me with a joyful spirit." Doubt, sorrow, remorse, paralyze all the powers of prayer, action, resistance to evil. They are the sickness and disease of the soul. Joy quickens. A joyous, willing mind has strength for the future, because it has conquered in the past; for that is the condition of its joyousness.—S.

Vers. 13—19.—*Working for God.* With a conscience set free from guilt, with a heart renewed by the Spirit of God, and full of thankfulness for God's great mercy, he cannot keep silent, but will seek to turn other sinners to God. The thirty-second psalm shows how this resolution was kept.

I. HE WHO BY HIS EXAMPLE HAD TAUGHT OTHERS TO SIN WILL NOW SEEK TO CONVERT THEM TO THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE. (Ver. 13.) To the ways of God's commandment. We cannot undo all the evil which our example has done; but we can in part repair it if we renew our lives.

II. DELIVERED FROM HIS SIN, HE WOULD PROCLAIM THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN PUNISHING AND DELIVERING HIM. (Ver. 14.) God is good and righteous in both—in punishing and saving from sin. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and *righteous* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

III. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF PARDONED SIN UNCLOSES THE LIPS WHICH SIN HAD SEALED, AND HE CAN NOW TRULY PRAISE GOD. (Ver. 15.) God opens the lips by giving the sense of forgiveness; then we can preach and sing with a full heart.

IV. THE TRUEST SACRIFICE WE CAN OFFER TO GOD FOR OUR SIN IS REPENTANCE. (Vers. 16, 17.) Not blood or burnt offering; the cleansing of the heart by sorrow and renewal of mind—the work of God's Spirit.

V. WHEN A MAN HAS BEEN TRULY RESTORED HIMSELF, HIS SYMPATHIES WIDEN OUT WITH PRAYER FOR THE NATION AND THE WORLD. (Vers. 18, 19.) Genuine concern for others is founded upon the regeneration of our own spiritual nature. Zeal for others is spurious if we have not been zealous about ourselves; like those philosophers Cowper speaks of—

"Giving lives to distant worlds,  
And trifling in our own."

8.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM LII.

HERE, again, the title is the best guide to the origin, intent, and authorship of the psalm. It is ascribed to David, and said to have been written on the occasion when Doeg the Edomite acquainted Saul with the fact of David's visit to Ahimelech the priest, recorded in 1 Sam. xxi. 1—9. This information led to a fearful massacre, in which Doeg himself took the chief part (1 Sam. xxii. 11—19). The bitterness of feeling displayed in the psalm is thus accounted for.

Metrically, the psalm seems to consist of three strophes, extending respectively to four, three, and two verses. In the first strophe Doeg's wickedness is set forth (vers. 1—4); in the second (vers. 5—7), he is threatened with God's vengeance; in the third (vers. 8, 9), David thanks God for the vengeance which he has executed, and declares his intention always to trust in him.

Ver. 1.—Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? Doeg was "the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul" (1 Sam. xxi. 7), or, according to another passage (1 Sam. xxii. 9), "set over

the servants of Saul." The position would be a high one, and would imply the possession of much physical strength. A sense of tyranny or extreme arrogance seems to attach to the word translated "mighty one" (*gibbor*); see Gen. vi. 4; x. 8. The word translated "mischief" implies something worse. In Ps. vi. 9 it is rendered "wickedness," and is thought to mean, in the Psalms generally, "ruinous, unfathomable evil—destructive malignity" (Canon Cook). The goodness of God endureth continually. Why not follow the Divine pattern, instead of setting thyself in direct antagonism to it? Canst thou expect to prosper when thou art thus opposed to the Almighty?

Ver. 2.—Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; or, *malignities*—evils of the worst kind. It was Doeg's "tongue" that brought about the entire ghastly massacre (see 1 Sam. xxii. 9, 10). Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully, since he had not told Saul the circumstances that made Ahimelech's giving aid to David no disloyalty to the king (1 Sam. xxi. 2, 8). The *suppresso veri* is a *suggestio falsi*.

Ver. 3.—Thou lovest evil more than good. To "love evil" is to have reached the lowest depth of depravity. It is to say, with Milton's Satan, "Evil, be thou my good!" And lying rather than to speak

righteousness (see the comment on ver. 2). Doeg's crimes seem to have arisen out of a mere love of evil.

Ver. 4.—Thou lovest all devouring words. "Devouring words" are words that cause ruin and destruction. O thou deceitful tongue! or (as in the margin), *and the deceitful tongue*.

Ver. 5.—God shall likewise destroy thee for ever. As thy "devouring words" have been the destruction of many, so shall God, in return, "destroy thee" (literally, *pull thee down*) "for ever"—destroy thee, *i.e.*, with a complete and final destruction. He shall take thee away; rather, *seize thee* (Kay, Cheyne), and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place; literally, *out of thy tent* (comp. Job xviii. 14; 1 Kings xii. 16). And root thee out of the land of the living. Destroy thee, root and branch, as thou didst destroy the entire house of Ahimelech (1 Sam. xxii. 17—19).

Ver. 6.—The righteous also shall see, and fear. Every manifestation of the Divine power and justice produces in the righteous man a feeling of awe. And shall laugh at him; literally, *over him*. This awe does not, however, prevent him from indulging in something like derision of his fallen enemy—or, at least, it did not under the old covenant, when men had not yet been taught that they ought to "love" their enemies.

Ver. 7.—Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength. The root of Doeg's wickedness was want of trust in God, and consequent alienation from him. But trusted in the abundance of his riches. This led on to an excessive trust in riches, and greediness of gain. To obtain wealth he became Saul's unscrupulous tool, the willing instrument of his cruelty. No

doubt Saul richly rewarded him. And strengthened himself in his wickedness; or, *in his substance* (Cheyne).

Ver. 8.—But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. In conclusion, the psalmist contrasts his own condition, as one of God's people, with that of Doeg, which he had described in vers. 7—9. Doeg is about to be "plucked up" and "rooted out of the land of the living" (ver. 5); he is like a flourishing green olive tree planted in the sanctuary, or "house of God." Doeg is entirely without any trust in the Almighty (ver. 7); he declares of himself, I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. It is questioned whether olive trees were at any time planted in the courts of either the tabernacle or the temple; but it certainly cannot be proved that they were not. In the courts of Egyptian temples trees were abundant (Herod., ii. 138; Wilkinson, in the author's 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. p. 236), also probably in Phœnician temples (Perrot and Chipiez, 'Histoire de l'Art dans l'Antiquité,' vol. iii. p. 322). And to this day there grow in the Haram area at Jerusalem, on the site of the Jewish temple, a number of magnificent cypresses, olive, and lemon trees.

Ver. 9.—I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it. So Dr. Kay, who explains the passage as meaning, "because thou hast worked out this deliverance." The tense is "the preterite of prophetic certainty" (comp. Ps. liv. 7). And I will wait on thy Name; for it is good before thy saints; rather, *I will wait on thy Name in the presence of thy saints, because it is good*; or perhaps, if we adopt Hupfield's emendation (נָתַן לְפָנֵינוּ), *I will proclaim thy Name before thy saints that it is good* (so Cheyne).

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 7.—*The man on whom God's just judgment descends.* "Lo, this is the man," *etc.* The destruction of a human being, however depraved, the loss of a soul, however guilty, is matter, not of triumph, but of lamentation. God has no pleasure in the death of a sinner. But the overthrow of tyranny and injustice, the just punishment of high-handed crime, the downfall of God-defying and man-despising pride, is matter of satisfaction and thanksgiving. "There is such a thing as a righteous hatred, a righteous scorn. There is such a thing as a shout of righteous joy at the downfall of the tyrant and the oppressor; at the triumph of righteousness and truth over wrong and falsehood" (Perowne). See this expressed in the poems of Byron and Southey on the downfall of Napoleon. This is the spirit of this psalm—not revenge or cruelty, but triumph in the vindication of righteousness. Here are three principal features in the portrait of the man on whom God's just judgment descends. Proud unbelief; covetous worldliness; obstinate, perverse impenitence.

I. PROUD UNBELIEF. "Made not God his strength." This is a far deadlier sin than people are apt to think. It is practical denial of our dependence on him "whose our breath is;" "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." It is the cutting off,

as far as thought, affection, will, and conscience are concerned, of the tree from its root, the stream from its fountain. The Bible always regards unbelief as springing from man's moral nature; a defect of the heart. In our day it is looked at as intellectual, scientific; created into a philosophy under the name of agnosticism. The universe is supposed to be a riddle without a key; human spirits, orphans; human life, a wandering without an aim, a guide, a hope, a home. How is it that any feeling heart or thoughtful mind can accept this dark creed, and not be bowed down in constant sorrow by the horror and desolate misery of it?

II. COVETOUS WORLDLINESS. "Trusted in the abundance of his riches." The unbeliever here described is not a speculative agnostic, but one who does "not like to retain God in his knowledge" (Rom. i. 28); because his whole heart is taken up with selfish greed (1 John ii. 15).

III. OBSTINATE IMPENITENCE. "Strengthened himself in his wickedness." Makes his own will his law; turns a deaf ear to reproof, warning, Divine truth, mercy, love. What must be the end? What *can* it be? Do not let us deceive ourselves. The warnings of Christ's gospel are as faithful as its promises (Heb. x. 26, etc.; 2 Pet. iii. 9). The cross itself, the hope and refuge of repentant sinners, is God's chief witness against sin; and warning of the guilt, folly, danger, of persevering in unbelief, worldliness, and impenitence.

Ver. 8.—*The olive an emblem of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit.* "I am like a green olive tree," etc. In Ps. xcii. the righteous are compared to two of the noblest trees—the queenly palm and the imperial cedar. In Ps. i. to an evergreen tree that loves to grow by flowing waters—the orange or citron, crowned at once with silver blossom and golden fruit. Here a less majestic tree is chosen, yet one which plays a great part in Scripture—the olive, whose golden oil, from its ordinary plentiful use in food and in light, and from its rare sacredness in the anointing of kings, priests, and prophets, is the constant emblem of the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I. The lesson common to all these similitudes—palm, cedar, citron, olive; and what our Lord adds, the vine and its branches, is this: EACH CHRISTIAN LIFE MUST HAVE ITS OWN ROOT, AND SHOULD EXHIBIT A BEAUTY AND A FRUITFULNESS OF ITS OWN. The image is in strong contrast with the picture of the ungodly man (ver. 7; cf. Ps. xxxvii. 35; John xv. 6). "I"—for my part, whatever others may think or say, desire, or do—I choose my part here, in Christ: "rooted and grounded in [his] love." "Green," *q.d.* flourishing; full of life and beauty; and no less of fruit—a flourishing olive tree.

II. Nevertheless, THE HOME OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS IN THE CHURCH OF GOD, OF WHICH THE ANCIENT TEMPLE WAS THE SHADOW. (Eph. ii. 20—22; 1 Cor. iii. 16.) Trees could not grow, of course, in the temple, strictly so called; but in the ample space of the "Court of the Gentiles" ("the mountain of the house"), olive berries were likely to be dropped and take root.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*A betrayer.* The "mighty man" might have been Doeg or some other who had gained notoriety as a betrayer.

I. THE ODIOSNESS OF HIS CHARACTER. It is marked by *deceitfulness*. Craft and lying are the tools of the betrayer. He cannot get on without them, and he waxes expert in their use. He may pretend friendship, but *malice* is in his heart. Even if he speaks truth, it is not in love, but in hate. "Whispering tongues can poison truth." Bent on mischief, he does not think of consequences. If he can injure the man he hates, he cares not though the innocent also should suffer. When he comes by a secret, which may be turned to advantage, he is elated. His paltry soul swells within him, he grows big with the idea of his own importance. Life and death are in the power of his tongue. And when his miserable schemes succeed, he boasts as if he had done a brave thing; as if he were the hero of the hour.

II. THE TERRIBLENESS OF HIS DOOM. There was a time when Doeg seemed to succeed. Then he may have blessed his soul, and the men of Saul's court, no doubt,

praised him, while he was doing good, as they thought, to himself, and was able to do good to them. But changes came. His real character was unmasked. The fearful results of his treachery were brought to light, and then he must have become the object of detestation to all right-thinking men. It is thus that reputations built on sand fall in the day of trial. The judgment of yesterday may be reversed to-day. The men who stand high to-day may be covered with scorn and infamy to-morrow. God is long-suffering. He even bears long, and strangely, with the wicked. But their day is coming. The judgment described in the psalm is terrible in its completeness. Image is added to image. The metaphors rise in intensity and force. There is not only *defeat*, as of a house beaten down, but there is *expulsion*, as from a home made desolate; and more, there is *extinction*, as of a family rooted out of the land (ver. 5). The overthrow is complete, and all this is by the hand of God, indicating that all deceit and malice and evil-doing are contrary to the Divine order, and doomed in the end to ruin. There is a conscience in society, and, as it is rightly quickened and enlightened, it says "Amen" to God's righteous judgments.

III. THE MORAL LESSONS OF HIS LIFE. There is much here deserving close study. Learn: 1. *The justice of God*. He is ever on the side of truth. His judgments are all righteous. 2. *The folly of sin*. (Ver. 7.) 3. *The blessedness of the righteous*. This lesson is heightened by contrast. How different the tree overthrown, and torn up by the roots, and the "olive tree" standing beautiful and secure in "the house of God"! How markedly and utterly separate, the evil-doer judged and put to shame, and the godly man trusting, praising, waiting, rejoicing in the sunshine of God's love, and the hope of his mercy for ever and ever!—W. F.

Vers. 8, 9.—Here we have *the testimony of a saint, confirmed as "good" by all the saints*. I. THE CHARACTER OF THE SAINTS. "I am like a green olive tree." The olive was remarkable for life, beauty, and usefulness. Habakkuk speaks of the "labours of the olive" (Hab. iii. 17); Jeremiah, of its "goodly fruit" (Jer. xi. 16); and Hosea, of its "beauty" (Hos. xiv. 6). It was therefore a fitting symbol of God's people (Rom. xi. 16), who are adorned with the beauty of holiness, and bear fruit to the praise of God.

II. THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE SAINTS. 1. The first thing named is *trusting*. "I trust in the mercy of God." The wisdom, the power, the faithfulness, of God all command our trust; but "mercy," what is most needed and always needed, is here singled out. The next thing is: 2. *Praising*. "I will praise thee for ever." Looking to the past, the present, and the future, countless reasons rise up for praise. What God has done is proof and promise of what he will do. 3. "*Waiting*" is the last thing mentioned. "I will wait on thy Name." God's Name is himself, in all that he is and says and does. The more clearly and fully we know God's Name, the more will our hearts go forth to him in love and hope. Waiting upon him ever brings refreshment, and invigorates our souls for new endeavour.

III. THE HOME OF THE SAINTS. "The house of God." So it is here. So it will be hereafter. The saints are happy in their being, secure in their possessions, joyous in their prospects. There are ever light, and sweetness, and holy companionships, and delightful employments, where they dwell. Heaven is their eternal home."—W. F.

Vers. 1—9.—"This psalm is a *stern upbraiding* addressed to the man who, unscrupulous in the exercise of his power, and proud of his wealth, finds his delight in all the arts of the practised liar."

I. THE ARROGANCE OF A WICKED MAN IN WORLDLY POWER. 1. *He boasts of the evil which he does*. He is not ashamed of his wickedness. 2. *He is bent upon ever new forms of mischief*. Works deceitfully, and not openly, and his tongue, as the instrument of his mind, is ever plotting fresh devices of evil. 3. *He loves false speaking and false ways more than the true*. The wickedness is ingrained, and not merely resorted to for a purpose. 4. *He exults in material riches*. Thinks they can carry him through, and enable him to brave all consequences.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF HIS OVERTHROW. 1. *The goodness of God will ensure it*. God loves the good; and his love for them endureth for ever—ensuring the overthrow of the wicked. 2. *The sure connection of guilt and punishment*. (Ver. 5.) The psalmist had no hesitation in predicting his future fall.



III. THE SYMPATHY WHICH GOOD MEN FEEL WITH GOD'S RIGHTEOUS WORK. (Ver. 6.) They are filled with a holy *filial fear*; and *they rejoice* at the triumph of the right and the true over the unjust and the untrue.

IV. GOD'S GOODNESS GIVES CONFIDENCE AND THANKFULNESS TO THE RIGHTEOUS. (Vers. 8, 9.) Trust, praise, and patience wait upon thy Name.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

### PSALM LIII.

THIS psalm is a repetition of Ps. xiv., with certain not very important variations. The most remarkable is the substitution throughout of "Elohim" for "Jehovah." The only variations which alter the sense are in ver. 5. These cannot be accounted for by corruption, and seem to indicate a retouching of the original composition in order to adapt it to a special occasion.

The expression, "upon Mahalath," or, "set to Mahalath," in the title, is thought to be a musical direction, and is explained by Dr. Kay as equivalent to the modern *Maestoso*.

Vers. 1 and 2 are identical with the same verses of Ps. xiv., with the single exception that "Jehovah" is replaced by "Elohim," as the first word of ver. 2.

Ver. 3.—For "they are all gone aside" (הכל סר) in Ps. xiv., the present psalm has, "every one of them is gone back" (כלו סב) —a difference which may be due to corruption, and which is, at any rate, of no importance.

Ver. 4.—For "the workers of iniquity" in this verse, Ps. xiv. has "all the workers

of iniquity"—a difference wholly unimportant.

Ver. 5.—There were they in great fear, where no fear was. So long a phrase as "where no fear was" (לא ידוה בחר) can scarcely have "fallen out," and must have been added intentionally to mark that, on the occasion in connection with which the revision was made, there had been no ground at all for the panic. For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee. This clause takes the place of the following in Ps. xiv.: "For God is in the generation of the righteous"—a very considerable change, which must certainly have been intentional. On the second occasion whereto the psalm was made applicable, there must have been a very great catastrophe—some vast slaughter of an enemy who had been at open war with Israel. Sennacherib is suggested (Canon Cook). Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. The clause in Ps. xiv. which this replaces runs as follows: "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his Refuge." Here again, both the phrases used, and the whole tenor of the thought in either case, are different.

Ver. 6.—This verse is identical with Ps. xiv. 7, except in the substitution of "Elohim" for "Jehovah," and in the pointing of one word.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Atheism contrasted with godliness.* I. **ATHEISM.** "No God." This implies: 1. *Denial of God's existence.* This is folly. The assertion proves nothing. Negatives are not arguments. Besides, there may be a God, though you, the denier, have not found him. You have not yet explored the universe. 2. *Denial of God's moral government of the world.* "No God!" if so, then there is nothing but chance. There can be no law without a lawgiver, no order without a controlling mind. "No God!" then we are free to do our own pleasure. "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." 3. *Denial of God's grace in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ.* "No God!" then the Bible is a fable, heaven and hell are dreams, the benefits of the gospel are a delusion, faith in Christ and the resurrection is a mockery and a lie.

II. **GODLINESS.** "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;" but the wise man says that there is a God, and that "he is the Rewarder of all who diligently seek him." Godliness implies: 1. *Faith in God as revealed in Christ Jesus.* Here is the satisfaction of the soul. 2. *Life ruled by the law of Christ*, which is holy, just, and good. Here is the true ideal, and the Spirit, by the gospel, shows how it may be

realized. 3. *Prayer and holy endeavour to the end.* We are not left to struggle alone, but have the Word to guide us, the promises to cheer us, the love of Christ to inspire us, that we may go from strength to strength, and that when called hence we may enter upon the blessed and perfect life beyond this world. Thus the godly witness for God. They testify to his being, for in him they live; to his character, for their aim is to be holy as he is holy; to his will and government, for they strive to do justly as he does justly, and to be merciful as he is merciful, who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." All the good in themselves, in society, in the world, is from God. What has been is in agreement with what is now. The progress of all things is towards a perfect end. The cross, which overthrew paganism, and triumphed over the eagles of Rome, is destined to win greater and yet greater victories. Yet a little while, and the great voices of heaven shall cry, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xi. 15).—W. F.

### EXPOSITION.

#### PSALM LIV.

THIS is a short psalm, written in a time of great trouble, and containing, first, an earnest prayer for deliverance (vers. 1—3); and then an expression of confidence in God's aid, and of thankfulness for the deliverance, which is counted as absolutely certain (vers. 4—7). The "title," which assigns the psalm to David, and makes the occasion his betrayal to Saul by the Ziphites, appears to be trustworthy.

Ver. 1.—*Save me, O God, by thy Name;* i.e. by the qualities of which thy "Name" is significant—power, goodness, and truth. *And judge me;* i.e. "vindicate me," or "judge my cause." By thy strength; or, "thy might"—the might which thou possessest as a *gibbôr*, or "hero."

Ver. 2.—*Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth* (comp. Ps. xxxix. 12; lv. 1).

Ver. 3.—*For strangers are risen up against me.* David's designation of his foes as "strangers" has been made an argument against the trustworthiness of the "title," since the Ziphites were Israelites of the tribe of Judah (Josh. xv. 55). But he might well call those "strangers" who were treating him as an alien. Comp. Ps. cxv. 5, where "the psalmist, heavily oppressed by his countrymen, complains that he dwelt in Meshech and Kedar" (Hengstenberg). And oppressors seek after my soul; or, *my life*. The phrase is exactly that used in 1 Sam. xxiii. 15, when David was in the wilderness of Ziph, in a wood, and "saw that Saul was come out to seek his life." They have not set God before them (comp. Ps. lxxxvi. 14). David, on the contrary, "set the Lord always before him" (Ps. xvi. 8).

Ver. 4.—*Behold, God is mine Helper.* There is a pause between vers. 3 and 4,

indicated by the pause-mark, "Selah." Then, confident of his prayer having been heard, the psalmist breaks out into a joyous burst of thankfulness and self-gratulation (vers. 4—7). The Lord is with them that uphold my soul; rather, *of them* (Revised Version); i.e. "one of them." But the intention is not to place God on a par with other helpers. Rather, as Professor Cheyne remarks, it is to make him the representative of "the class of helpers."

Ver. 5.—*He shall reward evil unto mine enemies; literally, he shall return the wrong upon my adversaries.* "The wrong" is that which his adversaries had wished to inflict upon the psalmist, viz. death (see 1 Sam. xxiii. 19, 20). *Cut them off in thy truth;* or, "in thy truthfulness" (Cheyne). God had given his people—those who were faithful to him—the promise of his protection, and, being true, could not go back from his word.

Ver. 6.—*I will freely sacrifice unto thee.* Confidence has now mounted up to certainty. Regarding the deliverance as accomplished, the psalmist promises a free-will offering (Hengstenberg, Kay, Canon Cook) to God, so soon as he can approach the sanctuary. The phrase used is the ordinary one for sacrifices of thanksgiving (Numb. xv. 3). *I will praise thy Name, O Lord; for it is good* (comp. Ps. lii. 9).

Ver. 7.—*For he hath delivered me out of all trouble.* "The poet looks forward, and treats the future as past" (Cheyne). He sees the "troubles" over, the Ziphites disappointed and punished, himself not only preserved from the immediate danger, but altogether freed from trouble of every kind, and rejoices in the deliverance which he feels has been accorded him. *And mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.* There is nothing about "desire" in the original, which seems rather to mean, "Mine eye has looked, calmly and leisurely, upon my (defeated) enemies" (so Dr. Kay).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Peril and prayer.* Here we have—

I. PERIL MOVING TO PRAYER. (Vers. 1—3.) Danger may arise from various causes. Soul-danger is the worst. Then when sore pressed and in trouble, the instinct of the heart is to cry to God, "Save me!" Prayer is "the mighty utterance of a mighty need" (Trench).

II. PRAYER INSPIRING CONFIDENCE. (Ver. 4.) Prayer brings the soul into the very presence of God. The thought of what *he is* ("thy Name") and of what *he has done* ("God is mine Helper"), furnish ample pleas for entreaty, and sure ground for hope. Experience gives us courage to cleave to the word of promise. "If God be with us, who can be against us?"

III. CONFIDENCE ANTICIPATING DELIVERANCE. (Ver. 5.) The nearer we get to God, the more truly we are in sympathy with him, so as to make his will our will, the more certain do we become of deliverance. We rise to the vision of victory. God is ever on the side of right. There may still be clouds, but we see the bright light shining above the clouds. There may still be struggles and pains, but we press on with renewed ardour and assurance, for we know whom we have believed, and that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him, and to bring forth judgment unto victory.

IV. DELIVERANCE AWAKING PRAISE. (Ver. 6.) Some forget their obligations to God when the danger is past; but it will not be so with the righteous. Like the Samaritan leper, they return to give glory to God—with sacrifices of thanksgiving and songs of praise.—W. F.

Vers. 1—7.—*Prayer for deliverance.* I. A PRAYER TO BE DELIVERED FROM IMPENDING DANGER. (Vers. 1—3.) The prayer is grounded: 1. *Upon the Divine nature.* "By thy Name, by thy strength." It is God's nature to save; he uses his omnipotence on behalf of those who call upon him. 2. *Upon the righteousness of his cause.* "Judge my cause [or, 'avenge me'] by thy strength." We can pray when we are pleading for a good cause. 3. *Upon the character of those who threatened his safety.* (Ver. 3.) They were not men who acted as if they were seen of God; did not set God before them.

II. THE TRIUMPHANT ASSURANCE OF THE PSALMIST'S FAITH. (Vers. 4—7.) 1. *He is assured of the general truth that God was his Helper.* (Ver. 4.) He knew that God stood to him in that relation usually, and for ever. He would therefore trust. 2. *His assurance is so great that he regards his deliverance as already accomplished.* (Vers. 5—7.) He is therefore at rest and in peace, delivered from danger. 3. *He will sacrifice and praise as one already saved.* Faith—real faith—is always joined to works.—S.

## EXPOSITION.

## PSALM LV.

THIS psalm has been assigned to Jeremiah by Hitzig, and by others to an unknown writer of the seventh century B.C. But no solid grounds have been shown for setting aside the traditional evidence of the "title," which ascribes it to David. It is Davidic in its depth of feeling, in its abrupt transitions (vers. 9, 15, 20), and in its reference to a faithless friend, who is the chief cause of the writer's sufferings (vers. 12—14, 20, 21; comp. Ps. xli. 9). The Davidic authorship is accepted by Hengstenberg, Dr. Kay,

and Canon Cook. The probable date of the psalm is the time of Absalom's rebellion. David, still a dweller at Jerusalem (vers. 9—11), has become aware of the conspiracy which has been formed against him (vers. 3—8), and of the participation in it of his "familiar friend," Ahithophel (vers. 12—14). He is already contemplating flight from Jerusalem (vers. 6—8), since he knows that his enemies seek his life (ver. 4). Under these circumstances, he pours out his soul to God, first depicting in eight verses (vers. 1—8) his desperate condition and longing for deliverance; then, in seven verses (vers.

9—15), describing the prevailing wickedness and ungodliness; and finally, in eight verses (vers. 16—23), giving vent to a feeling of confidence that God will come to his aid in answer to his earnest prayers, “afflict” his enemies, and rescue him from their hands.

Ver. 1.—Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication (comp. Ps. liv. 2; and, for the second clause, see Pss. xiii. 1; xxvii. 8; lxix. 17; lxxxix. 46, etc.).

Ver. 2.—Attend unto me, and hear me. A very special need is indicated by these four petitions to be heard (vers. 1, 2). I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; rather, *I wander in my musing, and moan aloud*. “I wander,” i.e. “from one sad thought to another” (Kay); and, unable to constrain myself, I give vent to moanings. Orientals are given to open displays of their grief (Herod., viii. 99; Æschylus, ‘Persæ,’ *passim*).

Ver. 3.—Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. Professor Cheyne says that by “the wicked” heathen men are primarily intended. But *רשע*—the word used—is “the wicked man,” in the simplest and widest sense (see Ps. i. 1, 4, 5, 6; vii. 9; ix. 16, etc.). For they cast iniquity upon me; or, “hurl wickedness at me” (Cheyne). And in wrath they hate me; rather, *they persecute me* (Hengstenberg, Kay, Cheyne, Revised Version).

Ver. 4.—My heart is sore pained within me. The attacks of his enemies (ver. 3) deeply grieve and pain the heart of the psalmist. It is not as if they were foreigners, whose hostility was to be expected. They are his own countrymen; one of them is his own familiar friend (ver. 12). Yet they threaten his life. And the terrors of death are fallen upon me. When a king is the object of a conspiracy, he well knows, especially in the East, that nothing but his death will satisfy the conspirators. So on David, long before he made up his mind to quit Jerusalem (2 Sam. xv. 14), the “terrors of death” must have fallen.

Ver. 5.—Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. A graphic description of the feelings which the apprehension of death naturally excites in a man. Where the expectation of a life beyond the grave was so dim and shadowy as in Judæa at this time, the “horror” of death would be the greater.

Ver. 6.—And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! The beauty of this passage has sunk deep into the Christian heart. Great composers have set to it some of their most exquisite music. The desire is one

which finds an echo in almost every human breast, and the expression of it here has all the beauty of the best Eastern poetry. Jeremiah’s words are far tamer, “Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them!” For then would I fly away, and be at rest. The desire of “rest” is universal. Whatever the delights of action, they can only charm us for a time. In our hearts we are always longing to have done with action, and to be at rest.

Ver. 7.—Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness; rather, *and lodge in the wilderness*. Doves, ring-doves, and others, are abundant in Palestine, and frequent wild and rocky places, far from the haunts of man. Speaking of a rocky gorge near the Lake of Genesareth, Canon Tristram says, “But no description can give an adequate idea of the myriads of rock-pigeons. In absolute crowds they dashed to and fro in the ravine, whirling round with a rush and a whirr that could be felt like a gust of wind” (‘Land of Israel,’ p. 446).

Ver. 8.—I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. As doves fly from storm and tempest to their nests in the rocks, so the psalmist would fain haste away from the passions and perils of the city to some safe refuge in the wilds. What he here anticipates, he afterwards accomplished, when he fled from Absalom over Jordan (2 Sam. xv. 14).

Vers. 9—15.—With a sudden transition, the writer passes from his own sufferings, fears, and longings, to imprecations on his enemies, and a description of their wicked proceedings. In the course of his description he singles out one individual for special remark—one who had been his own guide, companion, and friend—but who had turned against him, and joined the company of his adversaries (vers. 12—14).

Ver. 9.—Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues. The second clause contains a reference to the confusion of tongues at Babel (Gen. xi. 7). “Introduce confusion into their counsels, and disperse them, as thou didst with the wicked ones who were forced to leave off to build the Tower.” For I have seen violence and strife in the city. Such quarrels and broils, i.e., as usually precede revolutionary disturbance.

Ver. 10.—Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof. “It is not a siege or blockade that is described; and the persons spoken of are not foreign, but native enemies. These are compared to watchmen

on the walls; only, instead of keeping watch against the enemy, they 'watch for iniquity'" (Cheyne). *Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it; rather, iniquity also and trouble.* Compare the "violence and strife" of ver. 9. Society is disorganized. It is not only that wickedness prevails, but throughout the city there is violence and contention.

Ver. 11.—Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets; literally, *out of her street (rehob)*—"the open square, where justice ought to have been administered" (Kay), "adjoining the vaulted passage of the city gate" (Cheyne); comp. Job xxix. 7.

Ver. 12.—For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. The psalmist passes from the general to the particular—from the great mass of his opponents to one special individual. Even Professor Cheyne allows this, and suggests that we have here Jeremiah inveighing against Pashur. But the general sentiment of commentators has always been that Ahithophel is intended. And, if we allow the psalm to be David's, we can scarcely give any other explanation. Ahithophel was known as "David's counsellor" (2 Sam. xv. 12), *i.e.* his chief adviser, his "grand vizier," his "prime minister." What he counselled was considered as a sort of "oracle of God" (2 Sam. xvi. 23). His defection was the bitterest drop in the cup of the unhappy king. Anything else he "could have borne;" but this was too much. Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me. It was not one among my professed and open enemies—not one of those whose hatred I had long known and reckoned on. Then I would have hid myself from him. Instead of opening all my heart to him, as I have done to Ahithophel.

Ver. 13.—But it was thou, a man mine equal; literally, *a man according to my valuing*; *i.e.* one of my social rank, with whom I was on familiar terms. My guide; or, "my companion." But the LXX. have ἡγάμενον. And mine acquaintance. "My confidant" (Kay); "my familiar friend" (Cheyne, and Revised Version).

Ver. 14.—We took sweet counsel together (comp. 2 Sam. xv. 12; xvi. 23; 1 Chron. xxvii. 33). And walked unto the house of God in company; rather, *in the throng* (Cheyne, Revised Version); *i.e.* in the midst of the crowd of worshippers. When David went up to the house of God, who is more likely to have accompanied him than his chief "counsellor"?

Ver. 15.—Let death seize upon them. As this strophe begins (ver. 9), so it ends, with an imprecation. The psalmist calls on God

to bring destruction upon the whole mass of his enemies. Of the two readings in the original, the one adopted by our translators seems the best, "Let death come suddenly upon them." Let them go down quick (*i.e.* *alive*) into hell. There is an allusion to the fate of Korah and his company (Numb. xvi. 30—33), who "went down quick into the pit;" but probably the psalmist neither expected nor desired a literal fulfilment of his imprecation. The deaths of Ahithophel (2 Sam. xvii. 23) and Absalom (2 Sam. xviii. 14, 15), and of so many of Absalom's followers (2 Sam. xviii. 7, 8), were quite a sufficient fulfilment. For wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them (comp. vera. 3, 9—11).

Vers. 16—23.—In conclusion, the psalmist turns altogether to God, whom he now addresses as "Jehovah" (vera. 16, 22), and expresses his confidence that, in answer to his continual prayers (ver. 17), God will come to his aid, will deliver his soul from the machinations of his enemies, and will visit them with "affliction" (ver. 19) and "destruction" (ver. 23). Still grieved chiefly by the defection of his unfaithful friend, he once more describes the treachery and heinousness of his conduct (vera. 20, 21), before winding up with a word of comfort for all the righteous (ver. 22), and of menace against all the ungodly (ver. 23).

Ver. 16.—As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord (Jehovah) shall save me. The call is upon the God known to man by nature as the Almighty Ruler of the universe; the answer is from the covenant God of Israel, the Self-existent One, in whom Israel trusts. The two are different aspects of one and the same Being.

Ver. 17.—Evening, and morning (comp. Gen. i. 5, 8, etc.), and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud. From this passage and from Daniel's conduct (Dan. vi. 10) we learn that devout Israelites habitually offered prayer to God at these three times of the day. The "morning" and "evening" devotions were doubtless suggested by the law of the morning and evening sacrifice (Exod. xxix. 38—42); but the midday prayer, being nowhere commanded, can only be ascribed to natural piety. And he shall hear my voice. Constant unremitting prayer is certain of an answer. Compare the parable of the importunate friend (Luke xi. 5—8).

Ver. 18.—He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me. Once more "the preterite of prophetic certainty." David sees his deliverance effected. He beholds the coming battle (2 Sam. xvii.

11; xviii. 6—8). He sees that there are many with him; i.e. "many that contend with him;" but his courage does not fail—he is assured of being "delivered" and re-established in his kingdom "in peace."

Ver. 19.—God shall hear, and afflict them; i.e. "God will hear my prayers, and will afflict my adversaries;" or, perhaps, "God will hear me and answer me." But this requires a change in the reading. Even he that abideth of old; or, "he that is enthroned of old;" he, i.e., that sitteth, and has always sat, on his eternal throne in the heavens. Selah. The "selah" here marks probably a pause for adoration of the great and eternal King enthroned in all his glory. Because they have no changes; rather, *the men who have no changes*—exegetical of "them" in the first clause of the verse. The wicked "have no changes," i.e. no great reverses of fortune, until their end comes (see Job xxi. 7—15). Therefore they fear not God; rather, *and who do not fear God*.

Ver. 20.—He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him. Some explain "he" as "the wicked collectively," and maintain that in this verse and the next no particular person is pointed at; but it seems better to regard the psalmist as "suddenly reverting to the fixed and deepest thought in his heart—the treachery of his friend" (Canon Cook). Ahithophel had "put forth his hand against such as were at peace with him." He hath broken his covenant. The covenant of friendship with David (ver. 14), not, perhaps, a formal one, but involved in the terms on which they stood one towards the other.

Ver. 21.—The words of his mouth were smoother than butter; literally, *smooth were*

*the butters of his mouth*—i.e. his flattering utterances. But war was in his heart; literally, *but his heart was war*. His words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords; i.e. keen, cutting—according to our own idiom, "like daggers."

Ver. 22.—Cast thy burden upon the Lord; rather, *thy portion*—or, the lot assigned thee—that which God has given thee to bear. And he shall sustain thee. God will support thee under the lot which he assigns, however hard it is. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved; i.e. to be disturbed, shaken, unsettled from their faith in him. Note that these promises are made to the righteous only; and, among them, only to those who cast themselves in full faith upon God.

Ver. 23.—But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction. We must understand by "them" the ungodly, the thought of whom is associated with that of the righteous by the law of contrast. While God sustains and supports the righteous, he "brings down" and crushes the ungodly. The "pit of destruction" is the grave. Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days (comp. Jer. xvii. 1). Of course, the statement is not intended for a universal law, and indeed was probably pointed especially at the "bloody and deceitful men" of whom the psalmist had been speaking. The suicide of Ahithophel, and the slaughter of Absalom with so many of his followers, furnished a striking commentary on the statement. But I will trust in thee; i.e. but I, for my part, will put no trust in violence or deceit—I will trust in nothing and no one but God (comp. Ps. vii. 1; xi. 1, etc.).

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 6—8.—*A pathetic prayer*. "Oh that I had wings," etc. ! A very natural wish, pathetically and beautifully expressed. The Prophet Jeremiah gave utterance to the same wish, and for similar reasons (Jer. ix. 2). Hence some have conjectured he was the author of this psalm. The title, ascribing it to David, represents ancient Jewish tradition, which there is no adequate ground for rejecting. But the psalm contains nothing certainly to indicate at what time in David's history it was composed, or who was the treacherous friend referred to. The fact is, the Book of Psalms is a treasury, not of history, but of spiritual experience; a manual of prayer, praise, meditation, faith, for the Church in all ages. Its perennial meaning and value are rather raised than lowered by the uncertainty besetting special occasions and dates which keen critics labour to drag to light.

I. THESE WORDS PICTURE FOR US A HEART WEARY OF THE WORLD. The writer longs passionately to be quit of it, out of sight and hearing, in restful solitude. He feels as our English poet, when taking up Jeremiah's thought he wrote—

"Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,  
Some boundless contiguity of shade,  
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,  
Of unsuccessful or successful war,  
Might never reach me more !"

This *world-weariness* may be of different kinds—from widely opposite causes. There is the case of the man who has loved the world with all his heart, and is sick and sated, and still hungry and unsatisfied. He has loved *pleasure*, laid the reins on the neck of his lusts; and his reward is a diseased body, a worn-out heart, a blighted character, a guilty conscience. Or *money*; and while he has been piling up what men call a fortune, his heart has dried up, friends have grown estranged, the power of enjoyment has dwindled as the material means of buying it grew. Or *political power*; and has learned how thankless a task it is to serve people against their prejudices, how futile is popularity, party allegiance, how unstable earthly greatness. Like many a monarch and statesman, he is longing for freedom and rest. It is not these kinds of world-weariness the Holy Spirit depicts here. Those tired-out worldlings do not write psalms. They have sown to the flesh, and reaped corruption. What David and Jeremiah were so weary of was the *wickedness* of the world (vers. 3, 9, 11, 19). This is the key to the tremendous denunciations of the guilt and fate of sinners, in other psalms as well as here. Intense personal feeling is no doubt implied; but it is as rebels against God, not as private foes, they are described. The king—the Lord's anointed—ought to have punished them if he could; feeling his inability, he appeals to God. And be it borne in mind, God *did* punish them; as (*e.g.*) Ahithophel and Absalom. It is often asked—How can we reconcile these denunciations with our Lord's prayer, "Father, forgive them"? Answer: Remember the ground on which this forgiveness was possible: "They know not what they do." They were to have room for repentance. Remember, that only two or three days before, Jesus had uttered, in the temple, denunciations more severe than any in the Psalms; and, lastly, that these woes were fulfilled to the letter, after forty years, in the destruction of Jerusalem.

II. EVERY REAL CHRISTIAN MUST KNOW SOMETHING OF THIS HEART-SICKNESS, SOUL-WEARINESS, ON ACCOUNT OF THE PREVALENCE OF SIN IN THE WORLD. The better he knows the world, the more he feels this. Once our Saviour gave a momentary glimpse of the daily burden this was to him (Matt. xvii. 17). If so very imperfect a saint as Lot "vexed his righteous soul from day to day" (2 Pet. ii. 7, 8), what must the Holy One of God have endured in the hourly contact with sin! He was the "Friend of sinners." The Christian Church of the present day—and society outside the Church—shows more than in any former age of the likeness of his compassion for sinners. But are we not sorely lacking in that righteous indignation against wrong, and deep grief at the dishonour offered to God's Name, which are no less part of "the mind that was in Christ Jesus"?

III. WE MUST NOT ALLOW THIS HEART-WEARINESS TO SLIDE INTO DESPAIR. It must not abate hope, slacken effort, hinder prayer. The temptation may be strong—partly from forgetfulness or ignorance of the past. When a great poet allows himself to exclaim, "When was age so crammed with meanness, madness, written, spoken lies?" the reply is—What former age was less so? Not the age of Isaiah, or of Jeremiah, or of Malachi. Not the age which cried, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Nor the ages of the decline and fall of Rome. Nor what some call "the age of faith;" others, more justly, "the dark ages." Nor of the Tudors and Stuarts. Nor the cold-hearted, cruel eighteenth century. No! It is an old story, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." It is an ancient cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" We are "as they that watch for the morning." But courage! "The night is far spent" (Rom. xiii. 12). Armour is not for flight, but fight. "Like a dove!" Yes, David; if thou wert a dove! But thou art a king—God's servant, Israel's champion and prophet (Eph. vi. 13).

If this prayer is David's, it is pathetic and instructive to remember that it was granted, though not as he desired (2 Sam. xvii. 23). God can show us the unwisdom of our prayers by granting as well as denying. For the present, our Saviour's prayer for his own is *not* that they be taken out of the world (John xvii. 15). But whatever is right and true in this prayer shall in due time be answered (Rev. xxi. 3, 4, 27).

Ver. 16.—*Prayer*. "As for me, I will call," etc. In this verse—the crisis or turning-point of the whole psalm—you see the storm-tossed vessel making for the harbour, and casting anchor in safe shelter. A sorely wounded soul, vexed and out of heart with the tumult and strife of life, the wickedness of men, longs for

“A lodge in some vast wilderness,  
Some boundless contiguity of shade;”

where, far from the sight of violence and fraud, the din of business, politics, or war, he might be alone with God. But he discerns that if he cannot flee from mankind, he can take refuge in God. He appeals from an unjust and cruel world to eternal righteousness, infinite love, Divine faithfulness. He pours out his heart to God, and lays hold on him; and light and peace begin to stream in (vers. 18, 22, and closing words of psalm). The text suggests some very important views of *prayer*.

I. ITS PERSONAL CHARACTER; as expressing individual need and desire; the voluntary confidential converse of the heart with God. Custom, fashion, human sympathy, and opinion are all out of court. If in the whole world not another heart or voice were raised in prayer, the believer would yet say, “As for me, I will call upon God.” There are other kinds of prayer: the united prayer of two or three, agreed touching what they shall ask; the public prayer of the assembled Church. In private prayer, too, all is not petition for one’s self or others; there is confession, thanksgiving, consecration, submission, adoration. Worship may be wordless, silent. But the most wonderful, instructive, encouraging examples of prayer recorded in the Bible show us some strong earnest spirit face to face with God, in direct petition; *alone* with the Father of spirits, the Almighty Creator, even though a multitude were looking on. Abraham; Jacob; Moses; Joshua; Elijah; Hezekiah; Paul. This is what makes this Book of Psalms so precious a manual for the Church and for each Christian; a storehouse of liturgies, a magazine of prayers. This makes David’s life, in spite of his faults and sins, so true and grand a type of real godliness; the clear, full sense and unhesitating utterance, of personal relationship to God; the reality, blessedness, duty, glorious privilege, of drawing nigh to God. Think of it. There is something more than sublime—appalling—in this view of prayer. That a child of dust, yesterday in the cradle, hanging on God’s absolute power over the gulf of nothingness, whose voice can reach so few, even of his fellow-men, whose knowledge, thought, will, are bounded in such strait limits, should be able at will to speak with the Ruler and Author of the universe; to make his wish, weakness, misery, or his boldest hope and loftiest purpose, known beyond the stars, above the thrones of archangels, behind all the laws and causes and inmost springs of nature—to *God himself*; and that he should have a right to expect an answer! Is not this, I say, an amazing, sublime, appalling contemplation? How poor and low are all the heights of worldly dignity compared with the point to which these words lift our thoughts, to which you or I may soar if we make them our own! “As for me,” etc.

II. THE CERTAINTY THAT GOD HEARS PRAYER; its sure warrant, reasonable assurance, joyful encouragement. “And the Lord shall save me.” If this certainty were merely an inward persuasion, born of strong desire, it would be worthless. If based on any supposed claim of merit or special favouritism, it would be blind presumption. If on the experience of fact, that God *does* often answer prayer, it would rest on as sure foundation as the discoveries of science, and what we call “laws of nature.” But the haunting uncertainty would paralyze faith—Will God hear *my* prayer? It rests: 1. On *God’s promises*. If the Bible contains any Divine promises, they are promises to prayer. 2. On *the mediation of the Lord Jesus*. The Old Testament believer took his stand on the ground of God’s covenant; and securely, because, though the priesthood and sacrifices were but shadows, they were shadows of the great Reality—*Christ*. How much more boldly may we draw near, to whom the reality stands unveiled (Heb. iv. 16; Rom. viii. 34)! 3. On *the promised help of the Holy Spirit*. (Rom. viii. 26, 24.) Let us take up David’s purpose (ver. 17), and hold fast David’s faith, “He shall hear my voice.”

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The godly man in three aspects*. “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.” David felt this. Often had he been in trouble, but never perhaps had he been brought so low before. Evils dreaded had become realities. The dark clouds, long gathering, had now burst over him in furious tempest. Absalom, his dearly loved son, has risen



in revolt, and multitudes flock to his standard. Even old companions in arms desert, and the very friend most trusted turns traitor. It was a terrible time. The aged monarch, sad and dispirited, his name traduced, his tenderest feelings outraged, his life and kingdom threatened, is compelled, with the few found faithful, to seek safety in flight (2 Sam. xv.). But even then there was no rest for the king. His mind is in a turmoil; his heart is borne down by cruel doubts and fears, and the sorrows of death compassed him about. But in the dark hour he found rest and hope in God. The good man is presented in this psalm as—

I. **THE SUBJECT OF GREAT MENTAL DISTRESS.** (Vers. 1—8.) The cares of a divided house and the complaints of a disaffected people pressed heavy on David's soul. But worse things still troubled him—private sorrows, which he could tell only to God. Human nature is not changed. Trials are much the same now as they were three thousand years ago. How thankful should we be for such a record as we have in this psalm! We are taught that when sorrow comes it is not as if any strange thing happened to us. We see as in a glass how others have suffered, and we learn from them not only how to be patient, but where to find sure relief. How many, in all ages, since the days of David, have found, in his confessions and prayers, words wherewith fitly to express the surging feelings of their hearts!

II. **THE VICTIM OF SOCIAL TREASON.** We mix with our fellow-men. We have our friends and, it may be, our enemies. However it be, we cannot live long without knowing something of the bitterness of disappointment and the pain of betrayal. In such circumstances we have need to walk circumspectly. We must watch and pray, lest our grief should pass into unholy passion, and our just resentment rise to cruel revenge. There is a better way. Rather let the sense of injury breed in us a hatred of all injury. Rather let the feeling that we suffer wrongfully move us to sympathy with all others suffering in like manner. Rather let the faithlessness of man make us rejoice the more in the faithfulness of God, whose care of us never ceases, and whose love never fails.

III. **THE OBJECT OF DIVINE DELIVERANCE.** "As for me" (ver. 16) marks the difference between the godly and the ungodly, and points the way to the true Resource in every trouble. Help comes largely from prayer (ver. 17). Recollection of past deliverances is reviving (ver. 18). There is also comfort from a clearer insight into the purposes and doings of God (ver. 19). But the great relief, even when face to face with the most grievous trials, is in casting all our cares upon God, who careth for us (ver. 22). The burden which is too heavy for us, and which is crushing us to the earth, we roll upon God, and therefore enter into rest and assured hope. The last words of the psalm are a fit watchword for life and for death: "But I will trust in thee."—W. F.

Ver. 6.—*Seeking rest.* "Oh that I had wings like a dove!" David was not the first nor the last to utter this cry. Men in all ages have suffered. Everywhere we find the same unconquerable desire for rest. This longing underlies all religions and philosophies. And there are times when the cry rises instinctively, and presses for an answer. Who is there who has not, in sorrow or in pain bodily and mentally, or when sick and weary and overborne by earthly troubles, been moved to cry, "Oh for rest!" And yet the wish may be vain. We need to examine and try ourselves. There is a wrong as well as a right way of seeking rest.

I. **IT IS VAIN TO HOPE FOR REST BY SEEKING THE IMPOSSIBLE.** Man was made "but a little lower than the angels;" and yet, though all things are said to have been put under him, there are points in which the "beasts of the field and the fowls of the air" have the advantage of him. Hence they may become objects of envy. We are limited beings; but we can conceive ourselves endowed with powers beyond what we possess. There is danger in such fancies. The dove flies past, and all seems peace. But this may be a delusion. We know not what fate awaits it. Besides, we cheat ourselves with a silly thought. We know we have not, and cannot have, "wings." Wishing for the impossible only leaves us the more weak and discontented. Better face difficulty manfully. Better do what God has made us capable of doing, if we are willing, than waste time and strength in idle fancies of what cannot be. The doubter wants a "sign." The anxious sinner craves some sensible proof of acceptance. The

troubled mind, tossed to and fro amidst the endless strife of controversy, longs for some infallible guide. There is what Wordsworth calls, "the universal instinct of repose—the longing for confirmed tranquillity." But this is not God's way. "Every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. vi. 5).

II. IT IS VAIN TO HOPE FOR REST BY MERE CHANGE OF OUTWARD CONDITIONS. Place has much to do with feeling. What is near seems more real than what is far off. What we see touches us more keenly than what we only hear of from others (Lam. iii. 15). So with respect to "rest." We are prone to blame circumstances. We delude ourselves with the thought that, if things were altered, all would be well. The "imagined otherwise" is the heaven of many. So it is with many of the sick, the poor, the oppressed, the discontented. Absalom played cunningly upon this feeling (2 Sam. xv. 4). But "rest" is a state of the mind. It does not come from without, but from within. It is not won by change of condition, but by change of heart. So Paul learned (Phil. iv. 11).

III. IT IS VAIN TO HOPE FOR REST BY FLIGHT FROM THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF DISTRESS. There are times when flight may be expedient (Matt. x. 23; 2 Tim. ii. 22). Again, there are times when flight would be a sin (Neh. vi. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 10). Besides, flight may be a vain resource (Amos v. 19). The question is—What is our duty? Then, when we have settled *that*, like Paul, we should stand firm (Acts xx. 24). There are people who would quiet conscience by silencing the preacher, like Herod; or get rid of an unpleasant duty by flying, like Jonah; or hasten their escape from trouble, like David. But this will not avail. It is better to stand than to fly; to do our duty humbly and quietly in the place where God calls us, than to seek an easier lot. Elijah was a nobler figure confronting singly the hosts of Baal, than hiding in the desert. Peter and Paul and Stephen were truer men, and did a grander work by not holding their lives dear, than if they had cared more for themselves than for Christ. The true way of rest is the way of self-sacrifice. It is when we surrender ourselves wholly to Christ, to be his and his only, and to love and do his will for evermore, that we enter into rest (Matt. xi. 28—30). The psalmist in his better moments felt this. If his first impulse was "to flee away," when he came to himself he turned to the Lord as his sure Refuge (ver. 9). And what he learned for himself he commends with confidence to others: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (ver. 22).—W. F.

Vers. 1—8.—*The true and the false way of encountering the difficulties of life.* Sorrow, danger, and terror had come upon the psalmist with the force of a tempest. He thinks of two ways of escape—casting himself upon God and flight. Suggests the true and the false way of encountering the difficulties of life.

I. TAKE THE FALSE FIRST. "Oh that I had wings," etc. (vers. 6—8). *We must conquer difficulties, not fly from them:* 1. *Because the post of difficulty is often the post of duty.* And we find no rest in flight, because we have sought to evade or neglect our duty. 2. *The post of difficulty is the post of discipline.* Difficulty is one of the Divine instruments of our training; gives health and strength. 3. *Solitude brings an exchange of difficulties, and does not free us from the power of the world.* It is better to fight the battle of life than for the heart to prey upon itself apart from the fellowship of men and women.

II. THE TRUE WAY OF ENCOUNTERING THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE. *By seeking the help of God.* (Vers. 1, 2.) 1. *God will help us to a greater faith.* "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith"—faith in Divine help, and faith in the good and righteous cause. 2. *God will inspire us with a truer courage.* "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." 3. *God will give to those who are faithful all needed strength.* Will fulfil the promise, "As thy day [or, 'need'] is so shall thy strength be." 4. *Victory is easier to us than to the psalmist, through Christ.* Faith in God through faith in Christ will give every believer the victory.—S.

Vers. 9—15.—*A picture of corrupt city life and private life, and a denunciation of God's judgments upon them.* I. CORRUPT CITY LIFE. (Vers. 10, 11.) 1. *Corrupt in every part, on the walls and in the interior.* Violence and strife reign unchecked

universally. 2. *Falsehood and deceit ruled in the market-place.* (Ver. 11.) In the square, or market-place, near the gates, where was the general place of concourse, men cheated and deceived each other in their ordinary intercourse.

II. PICTURE OF CORRUPT PRIVATE LIFE. The sanctities of friendship were openly violated and renounced. The offence was aggravated by two things. 1. *That he who had become the psalmist's enemy had been a closely intimate friend.* Love had turned to hate, because of the triumph of evil designs or passions, or of "the whispering tongues that can poison truth." 2. *Their friendship had been consecrated by religious associations.* (Ver. 14.) A depraved life can sweep out of the mind the tenderest memories and the most holy associations, human and Divine.

III. THE PSALMIST PRAYS FOR GOD'S JUDGMENTS UPON THIS CORRUPT LIFE. The two forms of judgment which he imprecates are: 1. *The judgment that fell upon the builders of Babel.* (Ver. 9.) Discord among themselves and their counsels, so that they might destroy one another. 2. *That they might go down to the grave alive.* (Ver. 15.) Like Korah and his company, let them be carried away by death in the fulness of life and strength. The psalmist knew of none but violent means and temporal judgments by which such wickedness could be removed.—S.

Vers. 16—23.—*Contrasts in the character and experience of the righteous and the wicked.* I. CHARACTER AND EXPERIENCE OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. *His life is a continued exercise of prayer and faith.* Calls upon God, evening, morning, and at noon. Carries all his anxieties and fears to God; casts upon him his burden (ver. 22). And he does all this with an assured faith (vers. 16, 17). "And he shall hear my voice." "The Lord shall save me." 2. *He has been already delivered from great dangers.* (Ver. 18.) "Many were against him." Every good man has a past full of such experiences. 3. *He has confident assurance of future protection and guidance.* "He shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." God is good and righteous, and this is the foundation of his assurance.

II. CHARACTER AND EXPERIENCE OF THE WICKED. 1. *Generally, they have no fear of God.* Without God in the world; living, therefore, without restraint. 2. *They are traitors to former vows of friendship.* They violate without compunction former oaths and covenants. 3. *They are guilty of the most cruel deceit.* (Ver. 21.) Bloody and deceitful men. 4. *God shall afflict and humble them.* (Ver. 19.) 5. *They shall die a premature death.* (Ver. 23.)—S.



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